

James Howell



# Essential Chess Endings

The tournament player's guide

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*To my parents*

A BATSFORD CHESS BOOK

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# Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
x	captures
!!	a particularly inspired and brilliant move
!	a good move
!?	a move that is fine in itself but there is a good alternative
?!	a dubious move whose consequences are not too serious
?	a bad move
??	an appalling move which gives away at least half a point
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
wom	women's event
jr	junior event
Ch	championship
Wch	World Championship
OL	Olympiad
(29)	see diagram number 29 (etc.)
(55)	play starts from diagram 55 (etc.)
W (next to diagram)	White to move
B (next to diagram)	Black to move

# Preface

The endgame is the Cinderella of chess. It doesn't have the glamour of a complicated middlegame nor does it inspire the same interest as the latest openings novelties. It has been claimed that more books have been written about chess than all other games put together, but if so this certainly isn't due to a proliferation of works on the endgame.

I decided to write this book because I became frustrated with the lack of a guide to the endgame that was suitable for the players I was coaching. Finding material on their openings was easy, especially with the advent of computer databases, but I searched in vain for appropriate endings books. Some were hundreds of pages long or consisted of several volumes. Although fine as reference works, they were not books that I could recommend to my pupils. The smaller works looked more appealing but they were either too advanced or presented artificial examples that had never happened in practical play and probably never would. I began to suspect that many players weren't making the most of their potential because their endgame books were lying about un-read. So I have tried to produce a readable book that contains all the basic information about endgames that a practical player would ever need to know. There are only a limited number of general points that can be made about each type of ending and by including one practical example for each of these endings I have kept down the size of the book.

After all, the endgame ought to be the easiest aspect of chess about which to generalise. It is possible to assert, for example, that doubled isolated pawns are a serious weakness in the middlegame. However, if the player concerned also has a raging kingside attack then the generalisation clearly hasn't been very helpful. In the examples in this book there are no raging kingside attacks and doubled isolated pawns really would be a serious weakness, i.e. dynamic factors are less significant than static factors. Moreover, I believe that time spent looking at endgames is time usefully spent. Players who study nothing but openings seem to forget that a well-played opening leads to a good position, whereas a well-played ending leads to a win.

I don't want to do a hard sell on the endgame and how beautiful it is. I have found examples when working on the book that have made a strong aesthetic impression on me but in most cases I have reluctantly decided not to include them. Unfortunately, by their very nature the themes they feature are unusual and therefore not of great practical value. I have instead chosen to aim this book at players with little time for study and hopefully this has resulted in a

balance of material that reflects the reality of competitive chess. One major advantage of having access to a large database of games and an endings key is ease of assessing how frequently certain endings and themes arise. For instance, devoting two of the book's six chapters to rook and pawn endings might appear excessive, but I believe it to be a representative proportion.

Another advantage of large databases is that they often include many games played by club players. Endings books always seem to present models of perfection, whereas it seemed to me that imperfect games can be more useful for the practical player if the nature of the mistakes and the correct punishment are explained. Such games also tend to be more interesting and memorable. From my own experience I would say that chess players know how painful their own mistakes are and like being reassured that other people also make them. So the book contains examples of a wide spectrum of play, ranging from perfection to the occasional example of gross incompetence.

Endgame books sometimes overlook the fact that chess is a battle between fallible beings, so I have attempted to bring out this factor as much as possible. Winning won endings and losing lost endings is all very well, but the players who draw lost endings and win drawn ones are the tournament winners. Because of this I have tried to advise about wangling 'lucky' extra half-points out of theoretical positions. I have also included players' ratings where available because they give more insight into the psychology of the moves, especially since most chess players (myself included) are obsessed by ratings. If you belong to this group then I trust this book will help you to push up your rating or grading. If not then I hope that you will enjoy reading about a fascinating subject.

Finally, I'd like to thank all the people who have helped me during the writing of this book, in particular Graham Burgess, Paul Lamford, Peter Millican, Rod McShane, John Nunn and Jon Speelman. I'm also indebted to William Giblin and to my parents for their helpful comments on the manuscript.



# Introduction and explanation of terms used

I would like to explain briefly how the material for this book was selected. I have used examples from actual games wherever possible since that seemed to be the only way to guarantee practical relevance. I have generally avoided quoting the classic endings that seem to appear in every endgame book. Many examples are from the last ten years and should be unfamiliar to you. You can assume that any analysis is mine unless attributed to other sources but I have tried to avoid long variations when a few words would make the point equally well. I hope that this approach has cut out analytical errors but I would prefer the book to be judged primarily on the clarity of the prose.

On occasions the material balance in an initial diagram is at odds with the chapter title. This is because the art of exchanging is a vital part of endgame technique so I have gone back a few moves to show how an ending has arisen and assessed whether the players were correct to head for it.

Each chapter ends with a set of eight exercises. Because this book is intended to be suitable for lazy or busy players, I wasn't originally intending to include any element of self-testing. Then I came across so many instructive positions in the course of my research that wouldn't fit into the main body of the text I felt I had to include them somehow. If you just want to use them as an extension of the main text and look straight at the solutions then please do. Otherwise each set of eight is arranged in approximate order of difficulty.

The ratings that I have quoted for players are Elo ratings. To convert these into English gradings subtract 600 and divide by 8. Unless the games are pre-1970, the absence of an Elo rating probably means that a player is below 2200 strength (200 in English terms) and could be much lower rated than that.

Moves given in **bold** type are generally the moves actually played in a game but if there was no game then they represent the main line of analysis.

When making general comments about a type of ending I have sometimes used the shorthand 'White' to mean the side trying to win and 'Black' to refer to the side trying to draw. Obviously Black often wins endings but it seemed sensible to avoid repeated use of the clumsy expressions: 'the superior side' and 'the inferior side' or 'the defending side'. I have also used the pronoun 'he' as a generic term. This is all too often the correct pronoun for a chess player but should be taken to refer to 'he, she or it'.

Rather confusingly the term 'database' is used in two similar but distinct senses and I should explain the difference because I have used both in the

## 10 Introduction and explanation of terms used

book. In the preface and the first five chapters I have used it to refer to the corpus of a few hundred thousand games from which most of my examples have been picked. In Chapter 6, however, a 'database' refers to the finite number of positions and assessments which can be generated by a computer, and often stored on a CD-ROM for a given three-, four- or five-piece endgame. Computers have made a big difference to the theory of these positions and although many have little relevance to the practical player, a few were worthy of inclusion in this book.

The terms 'queenside' and 'kingside' always refer to the a- to d-files and the e- to h-files respectively rather than the side of the board that the queen or king happens to be on.

I have done my best to give general rules within each chapter about the different types of ending. It would be nice if there were a few simple rules that applied to all endings, but I am wary of over-generalizing so here are just six to keep you going – please read the rest of the book for further details and the exceptions:

1) The more pieces that are exchanged, the more important activating the king becomes.

2) If you are ahead on pawns, try to exchange pieces.

3) If you are behind on pawns, try to exchange off pawns.

4) If you have a piece that is not pulling its weight, try to exchange it. If this isn't possible then minimise its relative weakness by keeping as many other pieces on the board as possible.

5) Pawn weaknesses become increasingly important as more pieces are exchanged, so avoid isolated or doubled pawns and avoid pawns that are doubled *and* isolated at all costs.

6) If you are a pawn ahead then exchanges leaving you with pawns on just one side of the board will reduce your advantage.

# 1 King and pawn endings

King and pawn endings are one of the most important but worst played areas of chess. I think this applies at all levels of play: I've just been reading about a king and pawn ending reached in a game between two of the world's top grandmasters. White bashed out the 'winning' move and Black resigned. Then a few weeks later a reader of a Swiss magazine pointed out that Black could have drawn the final position without too much trouble. However, the grandmasters in question (and anyone else who plays endings inaccurately) do have an excellent excuse: endings, and in particular king and pawn endings, occur towards the end of the game. Competitive chess at any level is a tiring game and players often invest huge amounts of effort trying to settle matters in the opening and middlegame. Alas, the price they pay in the ending can be expensive when fatigue catches up with them. At least in king and pawn endings there is a certain amount of basic knowledge which, if you know it, can enable you to switch to auto-pilot and relax your tired brain. This is the material which I am now presenting: much of it deals with positions where one side has an extra pawn but I have also picked out five particularly important positional features which often decide king and pawn endings. The opposition receives special mention at

the beginning because it is so fundamental whilst the other four are dealt with at the end of this chapter.

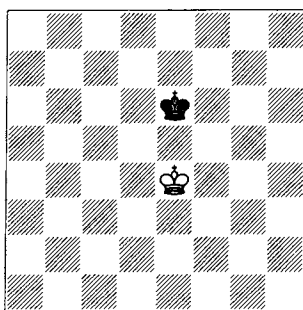
## The Importance of the Opposition

In king and pawn endings the '*opposition*' doesn't just refer to your obstinate opponent but also has a special and highly important meaning. Playing a king and pawn ending with no knowledge of the principle of the opposition is asking for trouble. An understanding of the opposition can turn apparently equal endings into wins and enable draws to be held in grim-looking positions. It crops up in almost every position in this chapter because of that important chess rule compelling the players to move alternately. When two kings face each other with one square separating them, one of them has to give way – his opponent is said to have the opposition.

(1) Black might choose 1...♔d6 in order to keep his king well-centralized but this allows White to penetrate with 2 ♕f5. Black can then himself take the opposition with 2...♔d5 but in practice this doesn't tend to be important since Black usually has kingside pawns which the white king can mop up. The opposition may be an important factor in king and pawn endings but it usually

## 12 King and pawn endings

1

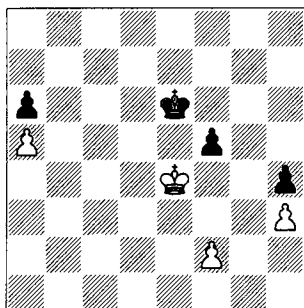


Black to move, White has the opposition. White to move, Black has the opposition.

pales into insignificance if either side has a material advantage.

2

W



**Kholmov (2485) – Howell (2450)**

*Belgorod 1990*

White wins because he can take the opposition.

(2) An unhappy episode from my younger days. However, it is such a neat example of the application of the opposition in practical play that I reluctantly decided to include it. White's king is already on the fourth rank, which makes it more active than its opposite number. This in itself isn't sufficient for victory in

most king and pawn endings: White needs to advance the king at least to the fifth rank to win any material. Black can answer 1 ♔f4 with 1... ♕f6 and 1 ♔d4 with 1... ♔d6, in both cases keeping the opposition and preventing any immediate progress. However, White still has the option of moving his f-pawn and giving the move back to Black whereas Black's f-pawn is already too far advanced for this to be an option for him. (In case you were wondering, my last move was ...gxf5+.) Clearly White has the potential for retaking the opposition and penetrating with his king: he just has to decide how to do this and allow Black as little counterplay as possible. After 1 ♔f4 ♕f6 2 f3 ♕e6 3 ♔g5 ♕e5 4 ♔xh4 Black can suddenly regain his pawn with 4... ♕f4. Instead Kholmov took the opposition with the ruthlessness...

**1 ♔d4! ♔d6 2 f4!**

...and I resigned (1-0). If it were White to move in the final position then the kings would just shuffle from side to side between c4/d4 and c6/d6 but because it is Black's move his king has to give way: 2... ♔c6 (after 2... ♕e6 3 ♔c5 White can either pick off the a6-pawn or come over and capture the f5-pawn) 3 ♕e5 ♔b5 4 ♔xf5 ♔xa5. Rather than doing a head-spinning 'I go there, he goes there' calculation, a useful device for predicting the outcome of pawn races such as these is to do a separate count of how many moves either side will take to queen. White will take five moves: ♕e4, f5, f6, f7, f8♔ and Black, unfortunately, takes all of six moves: ... ♔b5, ...a5, ...a4, ...a3, ...a2, ...a1♔

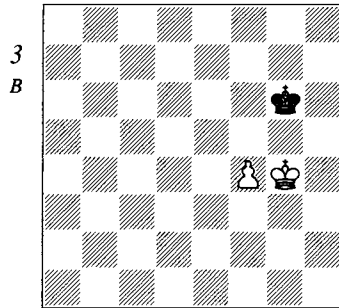
and since it's White to move at the start of the race you can understand my decision to throw in the towel.

## King + pawn v king

These are the most fundamental and important endings in chess yet many strong players still have not mastered them. Unless the pawn is marching irresistibly through and cannot be stopped by the defender's king both players will need to have some basic knowledge: these are the positions on which I want to concentrate.

### Pawns other than rook's pawns

If the pawn is not a rook's pawn then the same rules apply regardless of the file on which the pawn stands: a knight's pawn is no more or less favourable than a centre pawn. One other generalization that I would make is that other things being equal these positions are drawn. Having the extra pawn is not in itself a winning advantage; you also need a well-placed king and in this context *a well-placed king means in front of your pawn, and the further in front of it, the better*. Let us look at a position with the two kings facing each other and the pawn alongside the white king. I have chosen a position from a game between two grandmasters where White starts off with the opposition. Incidentally, when I refer to the opposition in king and pawn against king endings I mean vertical rather than horizontal opposition, i.e. kings facing each other at f4 and f6



**Suba (2520) – Kolev (2510)**

*Budapest Z 1993*

Draw regardless of who is to move because White's king is not in front of his pawn.

rather than f4 and d4. If the defender were to take the horizontal opposition with a passed pawn approaching then he would quickly discover that it is not a profitable exercise.

(3) 1...♔f6 2 f5

The only way to force Black's king back.

2...♔f7!

2...♔e7 and 2...♔g7 also draw but I think it is good practice always to go to the square that prevents White from taking the opposition and prepares to take it yourself. After 2...♔g7 White could seize the opposition with 3 ♔g5 but now his own pawn is preventing him from playing 3 ♔f5. Instead he chooses the next best option.

3 ♔g5 ♔g7

Now Black has the opposition and again White has to advance the pawn to make progress.

4 f6+ ♔f7 5 ♔f5 ♔f8!

If you took in the note to 2...♔f7 then you should have found this

## 14 King and pawn endings

move anyway – 5...♔e8? and 5...♔g8? allow White to take the opposition with 6 ♖e6 and 6 ♖g6 respectively. A sample variation is 5...♔e8 6 ♖e6 ♜f8 7 f7 ♜g7 (Black would like to be able to take the opposition with 7...♔e8 but unfortunately this is not legal so he has to vacate the blockading square) 8 ♔e7 and White promotes the pawn. In fact White could have also won by responding to 5...♔e8 with 6 ♖g6 taking the ‘diagonal opposition’.

6 ♖g6

Of course 6 ♖e6 is answered by 6...♔e8.

6...♔g8

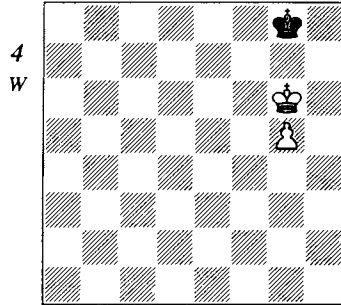
Now if Suba had wanted to be really stubborn he could have retreated his king and forced Black to play a couple more accurate moves but this isn’t a very gentlemanly way to play once it’s clear that your opponent knows what he’s doing. After 7 ♜f5 Black would have played 7...♜f7. So White played...

7 f7+ ♜f8

...and a **draw** was agreed. 8 ♜f6 has the advantage of regaining the opposition but the more significant disadvantage of stalemating Black.

It isn’t difficult defending this sort of position. All you need to know is this principle of taking the opposition whenever possible. There is not much that White can do to give himself winning chances: his problem was never being able to hold on to the opposition because his pawn was in the way. This is why it is so important to advance your king ahead of the pawn. There are the two basic set-ups which signify that a position

is winning and which you should be aiming for:



White wins

(4) This position is winning no matter where the black king is or who is to move. White’s king can instead be on f6 or h6 without the result being altered. The pieces can also be transferred to any other file (apart from the a- and h-files) as long as they remain in the same alignment (i.e. White’s king must be on the sixth rank and his pawn on the same or an adjacent file on the fifth rank).

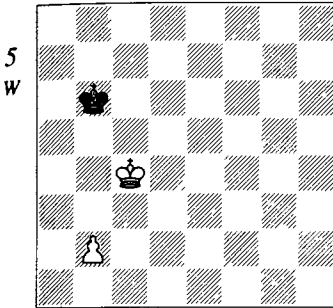
If it is Black’s move then White moves his king to the seventh rank and supports the pawn all the way home. If it is White to move then it turns out that he can win back the opposition at a critical moment by advancing his pawn:

1 ♜h6!

1 ♜f6 does not spoil anything but runs into sudden difficulties after 1...♜h7! 2 ♜f7 (2 g6+? ♜h8 is a draw) 2...♜h8. Now 3 g6 is the consistent continuation but unfortunately it stalemates Black, so White would have to go back to square one with 3 ♜g6. Although it only happens

to work with knight's pawns, this is a little-known trick for the defender that might well confuse a few opponents.

1...♔h8 2 g6 ♕g8 3 g7  
...and White wins.



White wins

(5) This position is winning regardless of the position of the black king and whose move it is (unless it is Black to move and he can immediately take the pawn!). White's king can also be at b4 or a4. This arrangement of White's king and pawn can be moved to anywhere else on the board providing that the pawn does not become a rook's pawn. To put it another way, White wins with king + non-rook's pawn v king if he can take the opposition with his king in front of the pawn. In positions like diagram 5 even if he can't seize the opposition immediately, he always has a spare move with the pawn that keeps it behind the king yet still takes the opposition. The winning plan is to advance first the king and only then, once the way has been prepared, the pawn. White to play only has one move to win but it is a

very logical one: he takes the opposition with 1 ♔b4. Black might try:

1...♔c6

(1...♔b7 2 ♔b5 certainly doesn't help) and now to make progress White has to play...

2 ♔a5

Now...

2...♔b7

...is the line of longest resistance. If 2...♔c7, 3 ♔a6! and now that the white king is on the sixth rank, he can follow up with 4 b4 and 5 b5 to reach a position like diagram 4. If 2...♔c5, 3 b4+ ♔c6 4 ♔a6 and again White can reach diagram 4.

3 ♔b5!

Taking the opposition again. The white king is now so well placed that he has other ways to win. Note, however, that it wasn't too late to draw: after 3 b4?? ♔a7 the only way for White to retake the opposition is to play 4 b5, giving a position like diagram 3.

3...♔a7 4 ♔c6

...and now that White's king is on the sixth rank he can reach diagram 4 by playing 5 b4 and 6 b5.

Black to move in diagram 5 would presumably try to take the opposition with...

1...♔c6

White replies...

2 b3

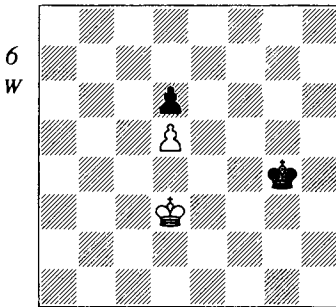
This is why White's king has to be two ranks in front of the pawn – if the pawn were already on b3 then White would be unable to retake the opposition without moving his pawn up alongside his king. 2 ♔b4 ♔b6 3 b3 comes to the same thing.

2...♔b6 3 ♔b4

## 16 King and pawn endings

...and White wins exactly as above. The fact that his pawn is now on b3 rather than b2 is irrelevant.

In practice, however, the superior side often doesn't have time to establish his king two ranks in front of the pawn. Positions like diagram 6 occur quite frequently:



**Coull (2005) – Stanciu (2260)**

*Thessaloniki wom OL 1988*

Draw despite the imminent loss  
of the d5-pawn

(6) It is White to move but her pawn is doomed because her king is less well placed than her opponent's relative to the pawns. The attempt to run round and attack Black's d6-pawn turns out to be unsuccessful: 1 ♖c4 ♖f4 2 ♗b5 ♗e4! (2...♗e5? might look tempting since it immediately attacks White's pawn and defends Black's but after 3 ♖c6 it unexpectedly turns out that the black king has no good moves and is forced away again) 3 ♖c6? ♗e5 and the kamikaze white king will wish that he had bailed out earlier. In fact diagram 6 is a simple draw – White simply has to ensure that she takes the opposition from the front as soon

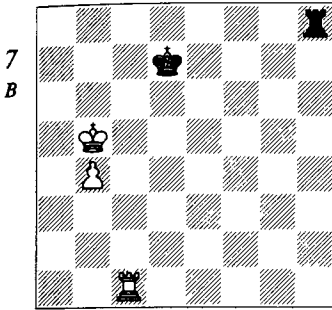
as Black takes on d5, i.e. after ...♗xd5 she has to be in a position to play ♖d3. So in fact the losing move in this variation doesn't come until move 3. If White chooses 3 ♖c4 ♗e5 4 ♖c3! instead then she is ready to answer 4...♗xd5 with 5 ♖d3, drawing. However, diagram 6 has become infamous in Scottish chess circles because, like the famous grandmaster that I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the Scottish lady resigned a drawn position (0-1). This example bears out my comment about many strong players not having mastered king and pawn v king. I should point out that if the pieces were shifted down two ranks (White's king is at d1 and pawn at d3, Black's king is at g2 and her pawn at d4) then her resignation would have been justified since the black king would have been on the decisive sixth rank after capturing the pawn.

### The distant position

When a king and pawn v king ending is reached, the kings are not necessarily in close proximity. Although in principle they should rush out and establish themselves as far forward as possible, some subtlety may be required because of the 'distant opposition'. If there is an odd number of squares between two facing kings then the player not on the move has the distant opposition – if moving your king towards your opponent's king is going to mean conceding the direct opposition then it is often worthwhile taking the distant opposition instead.



Here is an example where Bobby Fischer had tried too hard to win and found himself defending a difficult rook and pawn ending.



**Gligorić – Fischer**  
*Belgrade Ct 1959*

Black to play draws because he can exchange off rooks into a king and pawn ending and exploit the distant opposition

(7) Black's king is cut off from the passed pawn and unless he can quickly remedy this situation the pawn will march on unhindered. Playing 1...♖c8 would force White either to exchange the rooks or abandon the c-file and let the black king approach the pawn. However, after 2 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 White's king reaches the sixth rank ahead of his pawn and decides the game. So Fischer played:

1...♜b8+! 2 ♔a4

2 ♔a5 is answered by 2...♜a8+ 3 ♔b6 ♜b8+. Now, having forced the white king back, Black can again consider offering the exchange of rooks: 2...♜c8 3 ♜xc8 ♜xc8. After 4 ♔b5 Black takes the opposition and draws with 4...♔b7! but there is a move which avoids conceding the

opposition and improves the position of White's king: 4 ♔a5!. Then the only way to stop White's king establishing itself at b6 or a6 and reaching a position like diagram 4 is to play 4...♔b7. However, this allows White to take the opposition in front of his pawn with 5 ♔b5 and win. So Fischer checks again:

2...♜a8+ 3 ♔b3

Clearly, offering the exchange of rooks is now more attractive than on either of the previous two moves. But does it really draw?

3...♜c8! 4 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 5 ♔c4

White takes the distant opposition – there is an odd number of squares between the kings and it is Black's move. The implications of this become clear when we see that 5...♔b7 is answered by 6 ♔b5 and 5...♔c7 by 6 ♔c5. In both cases White takes the direct opposition and wins. However, Fischer in turn employed the principle of distant opposition and played a fine riposte:

5...♔b8!

and the players agreed on a **draw**. White cannot keep the distant opposition with 6 ♔b4 because his pawn is in the way and advancing his king lets Black take the direct opposition. After some random move like 6 ♔b3 Black can happily advance his king with 6...♔b7 since he will reach the safety of b6.

### Rook's pawns

First I should point out that rook's pawns are very bad news if you are White (meaning the side with the pawn). If Black manages to station

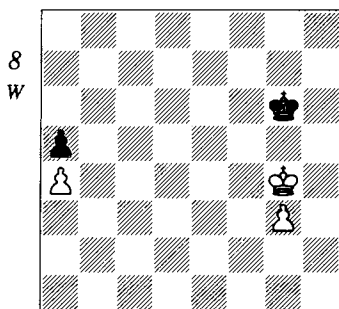
his king in front of the pawn then I would say it is simply rude to play on and you should offer a draw immediately. It is not difficult to force the black king to the back rank but then Black only has to 'remember' not to march his king away from the pawn to draw. A beginner could hold this ending against Kasparov.

The more interesting positions are those where king and rook's pawn v king is reached and both kings have been pawn-grabbing in other parts of the board: White will then rush his king up to try to force the pawn through whilst Black's will race round in front of it to prevent its advance. If White has an advanced a-pawn then generally his king has to reach b7 to decide the game whilst Black will draw by reaching c8 with his king. For an example of this working in practice, please read on.

## Pawns on both sides of the board – White has an extra pawn

### 2 pawns v 1 pawn

(8) White has just captured a pawn at g4 and Black has correctly arranged to meet this by ...♔g6. White doesn't have the opposition and his king is only one rank in front of the pawn so he cannot win by simply ignoring the a-pawns and trying to promote his g-pawn. His only serious winning attempt is to pick his moment and rush his king over to take Black's a-pawn. In the meantime Black will be picking off the g-pawn



**Hjartarson (2590) –  
Vidarsson (2305)**  
*Akureyri 1988*

White wins but has to exercise some care because of the presence of rook pawns.

and then trying to rush his king back to c8. Essentially White is trying to end up with a winning king + a-pawn v king position but before he makes a run for it, he wants the following pre-conditions to be satisfied:

- 1) His own king to be as near the a-file as possible.
- 2) Black's king to be as far away from the g-pawn as possible.
- 3) His g-pawn to be as far back as possible so that after capturing it Black's king will take many moves to reach c8.

Black, of course, is striving for the opposite of all these conditions. It is also greatly to the advantage of both sides to have their a-pawns as far forward as possible – after capturing Black's a-pawn White would like his king to be as near b7 as possible. If Black had managed to push his a-pawn to a3 and block White's pawn on its starting square then White could kiss goodbye to any winning

chances. After capturing on a3 his king would have to trek all the way up to b7 in order to establish a winning advantage: Black's king would have long since arrived at c8. White began uncontroversially with...

1 ♖f4 ♜f6

...but then faced a tricky decision. Intuitively it feels right to make as much progress as possible on the kingside before switching over to the queenside but conscious of the three conditions above, Hjartarson correctly played...

2 ♜e4!

The game ended abruptly after...

2...♜e6 3 ♜d4 1-0

...since Black's king cannot cope with his conflicting duties on opposite sides of the board. However, even after 2...♜g5 3 ♜d4 ♜g4 4 ♜c4 ♜xg3 5 ♜b5 ♜f4 6 ♜xa5 ♜e5 7 ♜b6 Black is so slow that White doesn't need to bother with ♜b7. Believe it or not, playing 2 g4?? would have thrown away two tempi and the win. Not only does the move make it easier for Black to take the g-pawn but also it means that Black can return to c8 afterwards in only five rather than six moves: 2 g4?? ♜g6 3 ♜e4 ♜g5 4 ♜d5 ♜xg4 5 ♜c5 ♜f5 6 ♜b5 ♜e6 7 ♜xa5 ♜d7 8 ♜b6 ♜c8 9 ♜a7 (otherwise 9...♜b8) 9...♜c7 10 a5 ♜c8 11 a6 ♜c7 and White has the depressing choice of either stalemating himself or taking a draw by repetition. Advancing the pawn beyond g4 doesn't help – as long as the black king remains two moves away from taking the g-pawn White can never win.

However, if the a-pawns in Diagram 8 become b- or c-pawns less care is required. This is because the king and pawn v king endings should always be at least as favourable as diagram 5 and thus very easy to win.

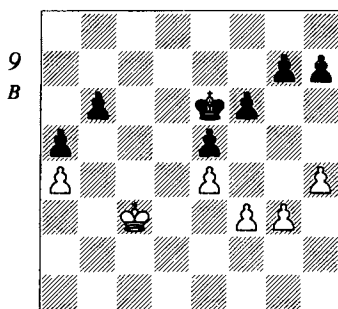
## More pawns

With more pawns on the board an extra pawn is a massive advantage – it is perhaps comparable to having an extra rook in a middlegame position but is usually even easier to exploit. There are no draws because the superior side suddenly finds himself left with just a useless rook's pawn. When looking through my database it was hard to find an example that wasn't completely trivial – the inferior side usually resigns within a few moves. The basic plan for the superior side is to:

- 1) Activate the king.
- 2) Create a passed pawn to tie down your opponent's king.
- 3) Cut out any of your opponent's counterplay.
- 4) Once he has run out of pawn moves it should be easy to force his king back.
- 5) Either penetrate with your king and pick off your opponent's pawns whilst he is still busy dealing with your passed pawn *or* advance your king and passed pawn to paralyse (but *not* stalemate) your opponent's king and force him to make concessions with his remaining pawns.

It is hard to offer the defender constructive advice but trying to be as active as possible on the wing away from the passed pawn is the

best chance. For example I approve of White's 4 h6 in the game below since it does at least set a last despairing trap (4...f5??). He even manages to run amok amongst the kingside pawns with his king, but it's clear that Black always had things under control.



**Glienke (2280) – Jahn (2220)**  
Germany 1991  
Black wins

(9) Exploiting the extra b-pawn here isn't completely straightforward as White's sole queenside pawn appears to be holding up Black's a- and b-pawns (her b-pawn is 'backward'). In spite of this the winning procedure is still more or less as outlined above.

**1...♔d6 2 ♖c4 ♗c6**

Of course Black would like to play ...b5 and create a passed a-pawn but this isn't so easy as long as the white king is sitting on c4. Both players now turn their attention to the kingside, hoping to run the opponent out of pawn moves.

**3 h5 g6 4 h6 g5!**

Don't forget point '3' – after all with many pawns on the board the

defender does potentially have more counterplay. After 4...f5?? 5 exf5 gxf5 6 g4 Black is completely lost since she can't prevent g4-g5-g6. Try to find a defence if you don't believe me! In this kind of position Black would like the kingside pawns to be as blocked as possible so that she can concentrate on exploiting the passed pawn.

**5 g4**

White has the opposition and it looks as though Black has lost the battle for tempi on the kingside. However, it turns out that Black does not have to move her king.

**5...b5+!**

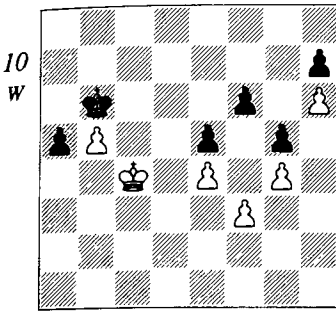
A neat trick. Just to illustrate how superior Black's position is, I should point out that 5...♔d6 also wins easily: 6 ♖b5 (other king moves allow 6...♗c5 and 7...b5) 6...♗c7 7 ♗c4 (7 ♗a6 ♗c6 is even worse) 7...♗c6 and Black has taken three moves to return to c6 compared with the two moves White has taken to arrive back at c4 – it is now White's move so he has lost the opposition and must give way. This idea of moving the king around in a triangle to exploit the opposing king's lack of mobility is known as 'triangulation'. As well as being Black's extra unit of material, the b6-pawn is also useful in that it defends the a5-pawn and controls the c5-square, thereby reducing the white king's options.

**6 axb5+ ♗b6 (10)**

White decided to make a run for Black's kingside pawns:

**7 ♔d5**

After 7 ♗b3 ♗xb5 8 ♗a3 Black can choose between the two winning



**Glienke – Jahn**  
Germany 1991

White to move loses because he is in 'zugzwang', a useful term borrowed from German used to describe the awful situation when you wish you could just pass and ask your opponent to make another move. Black to move would only draw because she would also be in zugzwang, albeit a less fatal one.

methods quoted above: 8...♖c4 9 ♖a4 ♖d3 10 ♖xa5 ♖e3 11 ♖b6 ♖xf3 12 ♖c6 ♖xg4 13 ♖d6 ♖h5 and wins or 8...a4 9 ♖a2 ♖b4 10 ♖b2 a3+ 11 ♖a2 ♖a4 12 ♖a1 ♖b3 13 ♖b1 a2+ 14 ♖a1 ♖a3 15 f4 gxf4 16 g5 f3 (not 16...fxg5?? stalemate) and Black queens first, giving immediate checkmate.

I suppose if you were pushed for time in a quick-play finish then you should choose the second method but it does require more precise calculation.

7...♖xb5 8 ♖e6 a4 9 ♖xf6 a3 10 ♖g7 a2 11 ♖xh7 a1♚ 12 ♖g6

In this kind of position the pawn has to be on the seventh rank to cause the queen any worries.

12...♚a8 13 ♖xg5 ♖c5 14 ♖g6 ♚f8 15 g5 ♖d6

I'm not sure what the most appropriate metaphor is for the effectiveness of the pawns against the queen: perhaps peashooters battling against a tank?

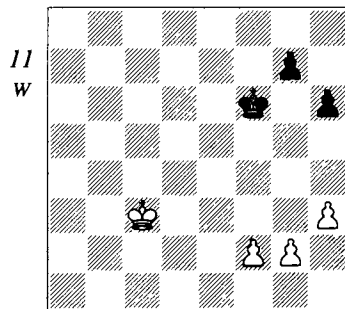
16 ♖h5 ♚xf3+ 17 ♖g6

Clearly White didn't have any pressing post-game commitments.

17...♚xe4+ 18 ♖g7 ♚b7+ 19 ♖g8 ♚c8+ 0-1

## Pawns on one side of the board – White has an extra pawn

I only want to look at one typical example – there aren't really any 'standard positions' in this category that need to be memorized. White's winning chances are very good but not quite as impressive as those positions where he has a clear extra pawn with pawns on both sides of the board:



**Biolek (2415) – Keitlinghaus (2485)**  
Ostrava 1993  
White wins

(11) As with most of the king and pawn endings that I've quoted, both sides should be trying to activate their kings as much as possible before touching their pawns. Then White will slowly advance his pawns. This usually involves one of them being exchanged – he just has to make sure that he ends up with a winning 2 v 1 pawn ending. In contrast to king + pawn v king the majority of 2 v 1 endings *are* winning, mainly because having two pawns grants White more flexibility. For instance, if he badly needs to gain the opposition then he has the choice of moving either of two pawns to achieve this. In general, though, similar criteria apply and White should be heading for positions:

- 1) where his king is far-advanced relative to the pawns;
- 2) without rook's pawns;
- 3) where he has the opposition.

Although it was White to move in the game, the position is also a win with Black to move but since his king can then come in as far as f4 White has to work a bit harder to expel it.

1 ♖d4 ♜f5 2 ♜e3 h5

Keitlinghaus is an imperturbable chap but even he was probably looking uncomfortable here. As Black he has some difficult decisions to make – arguably his pawns are weaker (through being further advanced) at g6 and h5 than at g7 and h6 but at least in the game he manages to set a nice trap which would not have been possible one file further back. What makes this position even more unpleasant is that White does not have to hurry with his pawn advances.

3 g3!

White's plan is to force back the black king with f4 followed by ♜f3 and g4+ but 3 f4 is answered by 3...h4! crippling the kingside pawn majority.

3...♜e5

3...g5 might look like an aggressive defence but actually only creates weaknesses. White has a number of good moves but to give you some idea of the possible winning plans in this type of position I'll consider 4 f4. Now 4...gxf4+ 5 gxf4 is completely hopeless since White advances his king and f-pawn and on the way stops off to pick up Black's h-pawn: e.g. 5...♜f6 6 ♜e4 ♜e6 7 f5+ ♜f6 8 ♜f4 h4 9 ♜g4 and wins. If Black adopts waiting tactics with 4...♜f6 then White can simply continue to improve his position with 5 ♜e4 (5 fxg5+ ♜xg5 6 ♜e4 would also win). Otherwise, if White can create a *protected passed pawn* then he wins easily, for example 4...g4 5 h4 ♜f6 6 ♜e4 ♜e6 7 f5+ ♜f6 8 ♜f4 followed by 9 ♜g5 and 10 ♜xh5 and the same applies to 4...h4 5 g4+ ♜f6 6 fxg5+. I should point out that a 'protected passed pawn' has a more specific sense than its name might suggest: it refers to a particular triangular arrangement of pawns. The two examples that arise here are White's pawns at f4 and g3 v Black's at g4 and White's at g4 and h3 v Black's at h4. Although some end-game books do quote 2 v 1 positions where a protected passed pawn is insufficient to win, such instances are very unusual.

4 f4+ ♜f5 5 ♜f3 g6 6 ♜e3!?

There is nothing wrong with 6 g4+, which would probably transpose to the game but in line with rule '1' quoted above, White chooses to activate his king as much as possible before mobilizing his pawn majority.

6... ♖f6

6... ♖e6 is an important alternative, leading to the same kind of positions as in the game but with a different player to move: White plays 7 ♖e4 ♖f6 8 g4 hxg4 9 hxg4 ♖e6. Black has the opposition but White has a good waiting move to regain it: 10 g5! ♖d6 (10... ♖e7 11 ♖e5 takes the direct opposition; 10... ♖f7 11 ♖d5! takes the diagonal opposition). Now it looks as though White cannot penetrate with his king since 11 ♖d4 ♖e6 12 ♖c5?? ♖f5 actually wins for Black. But 11 f5! wins since after 11...gxf5+ 12 ♖xf5 the white king reaches g6 and, as in diagram 4, guarantees a win. Black could try 11...♖e7 but after 12 f6+ ♖e6 13 ♖d4 (13 f7 immediately also wins: 13...♖xf7 14 ♖d5! and White wins the g6-pawn because he has the opposition) 13...♖f7 14 ♖e5 ♖f8 15 f7! ♖e7 16 f8♙+ ♖xf8 17 ♖f6 White again reaches diagram 4.

7 ♖e4 ♖e6 8 g4 hxg4 9 hxg4

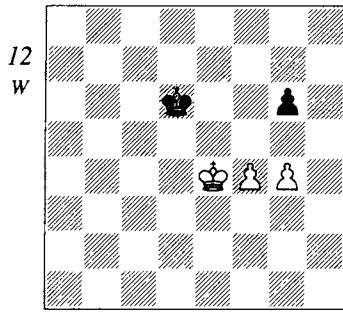
In principle exchanging pawns should favour Black but because they were rook's pawns it hasn't really helped him very much.

9... ♖d6! (12)

9... ♖f6 10 ♖d5 ♖f7 11 ♖e5 ♖e7 12 g5 and White wins.

Can you think of a way for White to make progress now?

Despite giving way with his king Black has managed to keep d5, e5



**Biolek – Keitlinghaus**

*Ostrava 1993*

White wins

and f5 all covered. After 10 g5? ♖e6 the game is a draw since White has compromised his pawn majority and lost the opposition. Such endings do arise quite frequently so I'll just point out that White can still make Black demonstrate some accuracy with some crafty manoeuvring. If Black remembers the principle of the distant opposition he can draw: 11 ♖e3 ♖e7! (11...♖f5? 12 ♖f3 ♖e6 13 ♖e4 and White has successfully triangulated; this means that White has managed to give Black the move and reach a winning position considered above) 12 ♖d3 ♖d7 13 ♖c4 ♖e6! drawing (but not 13...♖c6 14 f5!).

10 ♖d4!

The only way to win – it turns out that the seductive 10 f5? would fall into Black's trap: 10...♖e7! 11 ♖e5 (11 fxg6 ♖f6) 11...gxf5 12 ♖xf5 ♖f7 taking the opposition and drawing. However, had Keitlinghaus left his pawns untouched at g7 and h6 then the players could have reached this position with all the pieces

moved up one rank (White's king is at e5 and his pawns are at f5 and g5, Black's king is at d7 and his pawn is at g7). Then Black wouldn't even have this trap to fall back on: 1 f6! ♖e8 2 ♖e6 ♖f8 (now 2...gxf6 3 ♖xf6 loses whereas a rank further back it draws) 3 f7 g6 and now any king move apart from 4 ♖f6?? wins – once White has given up his f-pawn, he can be sure of picking up the g-pawn and reaching diagram 4.

10...♖e6 11 ♖c5!

Normally White isn't able to take his king this far away from his pawns but here they cover all of Black's possible entry squares.

11...♖d7

11...g5 12 f5+ ♖e5 13 ♖c6 ♖f4 14 f6 ♖xg4 15 f7 is a one-sided race.

12 ♖d5 ♖e7 13 ♖e5 1-0

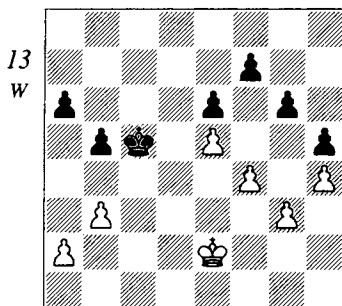
After 13...♖f7 14 ♖d6 ♖f6 15 ♖d7 ♖f7 16 g5! White would be winning even without the f4-pawn.

## Positional advantage

### Active king

I mentioned king activity in the preface as being one of the few criteria whose importance I thought worth emphasizing for all endings. So imagine its significance in king and pawn endings, especially where the pawns are already fairly blocked. A king that is only slightly more active than its opposite number can easily prove a decisive advantage.

(13) Sveshnikov has been defending a difficult ending of bad v good bishop and has just seized his chance to swap off bishops on c5.



**Sveshnikov (2570) –  
Kasparov (2595)  
USSR Ch 1979**

Black wins because his king can reach the sixth rank on the queenside and then, more importantly, can stay on the sixth rank whilst switching over to White's weakened kingside.

Unfortunately his young opponent's king is too active for the position to be held.

1 ♖d3

If only he had another tempo Sveshnikov could draw with ♖c3: in this kind of position, if the defender can confine the opposing king in its own half of the board then he can usually expect to draw. 1 a3 stops Black's king coming in to b4 but after 1...♖d4 2 ♖d2 taking the opposition with 2...a5 guarantees the king's passage to the sixth rank.

1...♖b4 2 ♖c2 ♖a3 3 ♖b1

Despite the huge difference in activity between the two kings the only way for Black to win is to bring his king over to the kingside: at the moment this would have to be done by retracing his steps via b4 and c5. What he really needs to do is liquidate



the queenside pawns in such a way that a path is opened up for his king along the sixth rank. This is the thematic winning plan and, helped by the fact that White can only respond with ♖a1-b1-a1, Kasparov carries it out remorselessly.

3...a5 4 ♖a1 a4 5 bxa4 ♕xa4

5...bxa4 would leave the two remaining queenside pawns facing each other and would be a serious mistake because:

a) Black's king could never run to the kingside without losing the a-pawn; and

b) he would no longer be able to liquidate White's a-pawn and thereby reach b3 with his king.

6 ♕b1

It looks more logical to exploit the retreat of Black's king with 6 ♕b2 but Kasparov would have banged out 6...b4 when, as in the game, his king returns to a3.

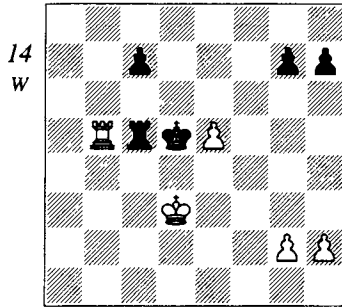
6...♕a3 7 ♖a1 b4 8 ♕b1 b3 0-1

It really is that simple: 9 axb3 ♕xb3 and there is nothing stopping ...♕c3-d3-e3-f3xg3.

### Outside passed pawn

I think it best to use an example to show what is meant by an 'outside passed pawn' and why it takes on such immense importance in king and pawn endings:

(14) White has been outplayed by his great opponent although after 1 ♖b8 he might still have put up tough resistance despite losing the e5-pawn. Rook endings are notoriously drawish but Sokolov prefers to maintain material equality and take



A. Sokolov (2635) –  
Korchnoi (2630)

Tilburg 1987

White to play: Black is better, but is clearly winning if the rooks come off due to his outside passed c-pawn.

his chances with the rooks off. Although his decision is objectively a bad one I can sympathize with it – it does seem incredible that White is better off a pawn down in a rook and pawn ending than with level material in a king and pawn ending – this gives you some idea of how decisive a factor the outside passed pawn can be.

1 ♖xc5+? ♕xc5 2 ♖e4 ♕c6

Unfortunately for Sokolov, king and pawn endings are highly sensitive to positional nuances and here Black's outside passed pawn is a vital positional factor – the active position of the white king is almost irrelevant. Both kings will gravitate towards and end up capturing the opposing passed pawns and will then rush over to grab the remaining booty, the g- and h-pawns. White's problem is that Black's passed pawn is two files to the left of his own so that his

king will end up two files further away from the action than Black's. This is the basis for the importance of the outside passed pawn. And if White is losing here then imagine how much worse his position would be if Black's c-pawn were an a-pawn. Then the white king would end up even further away from the action and his cause would be completely hopeless. If White could support his passed pawn with his king, say from f6 or f7, then things would be different – but Korchnoi has no intention of allowing this to happen. His kingside pawns are firmly controlling the f6- and g6-squares whilst his king is heading back to d7 to cover e6.

### 3 h4

Because the black king will be trying to capture White's kingside pawns as quickly as possible in a few moves time it is arguably a bad idea to move (i.e. weaken) them. When I first looked at this ending I was intrigued as to whether Sokolov would really have been losing if he had left these pawns untouched: 3 ♖d4 ♖d7 4 ♖d5 c6+ (Korchnoi) 5 ♖c5 g5 6 e6+ (Korchnoi only gives 6 g4) 6...♗xe6 7 ♗xc6 g4!. Since White is not actually threatening to do anything with his king Black takes time out to improve his position. Given time Black will play ...h5, ...h4 and ...g3 before coming round and taking the g2-pawn, so White has to do something. However, moving his king up the board is too slow and can be ignored by Black. Moving his king down back towards the pawns is equally unsuccessful: 8 ♖c5 ♗e5! 9

♖c4 ♗e4 10 ♖c3 ♗e3 followed by 11...♗f2. So White is completely lost however he plays.

### 3...♖d7 4 ♖d5 h5

It is useful to fix the kingside pawns before coming in to take them.

### 5 e6+

This weakens the e-pawn but 5 g3 g6 does not help and after a king move Black can occupy the important e6-square.

### 5...♗e7 6 ♖c6

I think I would have tried 6 ♗e5 although 6...c6 7 ♗f5 (7 g3 g6! is immediate zugzwang since White has to abandon his e6-pawn) 7...c5 8 ♗e5 c4 9 ♖d4 ♗xe6 10 ♖xc4 ♗f5 11 ♖d4 ♖g4 12 ♗e4 ♗xh4 13 ♗f4 g6! reaches the same position as the game.

### 6...♗xe6 7 ♖xc7 ♗f5 8 ♖d6 ♖g4 9 ♗e5 ♗xh4

Black has reached a 2 v 1 ending and, as I pointed out above, these are usually winning. However, he does still have to exercise some care because of the clumsy position of his king.

### 10 ♖f4

10 ♗f5 is met by 10...g5! 11 ♖g6 ♖g4 and Black slowly consolidates.

### 10...g6!

Sokolov has managed to set an evil trap: after 10...g5+?? 11 ♗f5 Black's options are being rapidly reduced and after 11...g4 12 ♗f4 g3 13 ♗f5 they have disappeared altogether.

### 11 ♖f3 g5

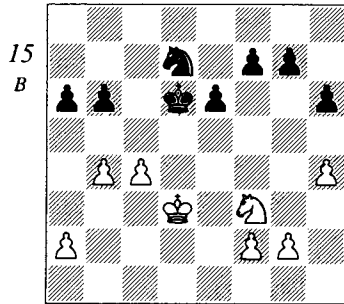
White could try the cheeky 12 g4 but unfortunately for him the ending of king v king and doubled pawns is

losing if the pawns are not rook's pawns: 12...hxg4+ 13 ♔g2 g3 14 ♔g1 ♕h3 15 ♔h1 g2+ 16 ♔g1 g4 (the second pawn gives Black a vital extra tempo) 17 ♔f2 ♕h2 and Black wins. Moving the g-pawn one square is equally hopeless: 12 g3+ ♕h3 followed by 13...g4 picks up the g-pawn so the most stubborn defence is simply to retreat the king and wait. However, Sokolov had no desire to watch Korchnoi bringing his king to g3 and decisively advancing his pawns, so he resigned (0-1).

### Superior pawn majority

It is prudent to avoid imperfections such as doubled and backward pawns in your pawn structure in middle-game positions but in king and pawn endings such flaws can be fatal. This is especially true of weaknesses in a pawn majority – if your opponent is successfully creating a passed pawn on the other side of the board then failing to match him can be disastrous. By analogy you should also be looking to force weaknesses in your opponent's pawn structure – crippling his pawn majority can be a very effective way of deciding a game.

(15) The position is equal. It could be argued that because of the pawn structure White is closer to creating a passed pawn but in knight endings positional factors such as this are not as important as in king and pawn endings: the presence of knights makes it much easier for the strategically inferior side to find counterplay. Moreover, Black's knight



### Santori – Storme

*Wch Girls U18 1995*

Black to play: draw, but if the knights are exchanged White is better.

and king are beautifully placed to cover c5 and also to prepare the advance of Black's kingside pawns. White, on the other hand, has no obvious plan and will find it hard to hold up Black's kingside pawn advances without weakening her own pawns. For instance, h5 by White can always be answered by ...♘f6 picking off the h-pawn. I would have started with ...f5 and ...e5 and followed up with ...g5 if White moved her knight. Instead Black chose...

1...♗e5+?

This is a bad move for three reasons:

1) With the exchange of knights, White's queenside pawn majority grows in strength relative to Black's kingside majority – although as yet neither side has pawn weaknesses it is now much easier for White to generate a passed c-pawn than for Black to create a passed e-pawn. A 3 v 2 majority is usually easier to convert than a 4 v 3 majority and the

proximity of both sides' queenside pawns to each other makes this conversion even easier for White.

2) After White takes the knight, Black's king is drawn out of position. If Black's e6-pawn were at c6 then e5 would be an ideal square for her king. Here, however, it obstructs her own majority and does little to hold up White's.

3) Psychologically the text-move shows weakness – it suggests to me that Black is desperate to exchange pieces and 'make a draw' regardless of the concessions involved. I have already pointed out that exchanging knights here makes a draw objectively less likely but I would also say that most players are reluctant to try to win a drawn position if they can envisage it turning against them. Determined players are happy to play on any position as long as they have minimal losing chances and here the exchange of knights means that suddenly White can happily push for a win without risking anything.

**2 ♖xe5 ♜xe5 3 ♜e3**

Forcing Black's king back with f4+ is a reasonable idea in itself but White might have looked to see if there was any way of hindering the mobilization of Black's kingside majority. There is a move that fits the bill: 3 h5!. This would be a nice positional idea at any stage of the game but since king and pawn endings are so sensitive to positional nuances it is particularly potent in this position. I hope it's clear from a superficial glance that the move is a strong one but I'll give some short variations to give you some idea why this should

be. Black can only rid herself of the cramping influence of this pawn at the cost of ruining her pawn structure: 3...g6? 4 hxg6 fxg6 5 ♜e3 h5 (5...g5 6 g4 leads to complete paralysis of the black majority) 6 f4+ ♜f5 (6...♜d6 7 g3! {to prevent 7...h4} 7...e5 8 ♜e4! exf4 9 ♜xf4 and Black cannot simultaneously cover g6 and keep an effective eye on the white c-pawn) 7 c5 bxc5 8 bxc5 e5 9 fxe5 ♜xe5 10 c6 ♜d6 11 ♜f4 ♜xc6 12 ♜g5 and White wins.

Alternatively Black can (and should) ignore the h-pawn: 3 h5! f6 (to cover the e5-square in preparation for a strategic retreat of the black king) 4 ♜e3 ♜d6 5 ♜d4 ♜c6 and Black will shuffle her king up and down hoping that White doesn't find a way to improve her position. Even though she could create an outside passed pawn with c5 at some point, if it doesn't open a way for the white king into the black position then it won't actually achieve very much. I haven't done an exhaustive analysis of this position for you but I hope it is clear that the pawn at h5 exerts an immobilizing effect on the black kingside majority.

**3...g5!**

Not giving White a second chance for h5.

**4 hxg5 hxg5 5 g3**

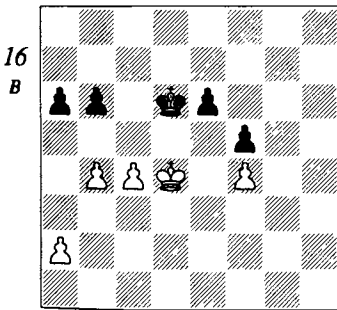
Part waiting move and part preparation for f4+.

**5...f5??**

Allows White to fix the e-pawn as backward and ensure that Black never does mobilize her majority. The idea of ...f5, ...♜d6, and ...e5 is fine in principle but Black simply

doesn't have time since it only takes White two moves to play f4 and ♔d4. It would be nice for my theme of fixing backward pawns if 5...g4 (fixing the f2-pawn) were the best alternative but unfortunately it does leave the g4-pawn rather weak. Then if Black ever defends it with ...f5 then e5 becomes an inviting entry square for the white king. Black's position isn't quite good enough for such bold measures – simply 5...f6 erecting a barrier to the white king's entry is a draw. Black can retreat her king to d6 if necessary and she can hold the plan of ...f5 and ...e5 in reserve for later. After 5...f5??, however, Black is lost.

6 f4+! gxf4+ 7 gxf4+ ♔d6 8 ♔d4 (16)



### Santori – Storme

Wch Girls U18 1995

White wins because her pawn majority is mobile whereas Black's isn't.

8...♔c6

8...e5+ 9 fxe5+ ♔e6 10 c5 bxc5+ 11 bxc5 f4 12 c6 f3 13 ♔e3 wins – the positioning of the c6- and e5-pawns a knight's move away from

each other as a way of protecting themselves is worth remembering. 8...a5 would have been a tougher defence since the further advanced Black's a-pawn is, the more chance she has in the impending race against White's f-pawn. After 9 c5+ bxc5+ 10 bxc5+ ♔c6 11 ♔e5 ♔xc5 12 ♔xe6 ♔b4 13 ♔xf5 ♔a3 14 ♔e4! ♔xa2 15 f5 a4 16 f6 a3 17 f7 ♔b1 18 f8♗ a2 19 ♗f1+ ♔b2 20 ♗e2+ ♔b1 21 ♔d3 White wins since queening allows mate in one.

9 ♔e5 ♔d7 10 c5 bxc5 11 bxc5 a5 12 c6+

It seems a shame to swap White's beautiful passed pawn for Black's sickly backward pawn but as f5 also drops off it is a worthwhile exchange.

12...♔xc6 13 ♔xe6 ♔c5 14 ♔xf5 ♔c4 15 ♔e6

As we will see later, 15 ♔e4 would have been more accurate.

15...a4 16 f5 ♔c3 17 f6 ♔b2 18 f7 ♔xa2 19 f8♗ a3 20 ♔d5 ♔b2 21 ♔c4

I would have played 21 ♗b4+ ♔a2 22 ♔c4 but White's winning method does have a certain elegance.

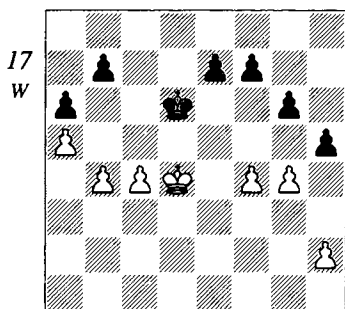
21...a2 22 ♗f2+ ♔b1 23 ♔b3 1-0

Unless Black promotes to a knight it is mate next move.

### Passed pawns a long way apart

Although in king and pawn endings the king is arguably the most powerful unit on the board, he is still a doddering old man who cannot move very fast. This means that he is usually incapable of dealing with passed pawns on both wings but is actually fairly adept at standing still and

holding up connected passed pawns coming towards him.



**Hort (2615) – Dončević (2350)**  
*Germany 1985*  
 White to play: White stands much better

(17) This ending is similar to the last one but is even more favourable for White. He has a number of positional advantages:

- 1) A more active king.
- 2) The possibility of quickly creating an advanced passed pawn on the queenside.
- 3) The possibility of holding up Black's majority on the kingside.

Hort played...

**1 g5!**

...establishing a bind on the kingside. Now Black had to try waiting tactics with 1...♖e6 or 1...♗c6 when it would not be easy for White to make progress. Creating a passed c-pawn is insufficient to win as long as his king cannot infiltrate the black position. Instead Black lost patience and made a mistake rather

like 5...f5?? in the previous game. He decided to try to activate his majority immediately and played...

**1...f6??**

Surprisingly, this move allows White to set up a passed pawn on the kingside with...

**2 f5!**

Even though the kingside is the wing where Black has material superiority, the fact that White's pawns are further advanced than Black's (on account of Hort's 1 g5!) means that he is on the lookout for sacrificial breakthroughs. Whatever Black does, a passed pawn will reach g6 and when his king runs over to stop it White will send another one through on the queenside. Black tried the desperate...

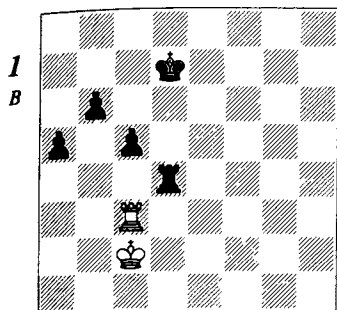
**2...e5+**

...but Hort just chose to maintain the status quo with...

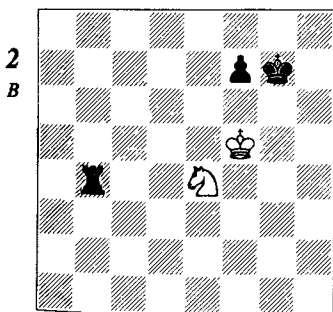
**3 ♖e3**

After 3...gxf5 4 g6 f4+ 5 ♖d3 ♖e6 6 b5 Black resigned (1-0). White's king can easily cope with the cluster of black passed pawns. The game might have continued 6...f3 7 bxa6 bxa6 8 c5 e4+ 9 ♖e3 f5 10 c6 f4+ 11 ♖f2 and the black king would probably have walked out in disgust and joined a game of draughts. Such is the power of this kind of breakthrough that if Black's king had started off at c6 rather than d6 then it couldn't have reached a white pawn at g6 and White wouldn't have even found it necessary to create a second passed pawn.

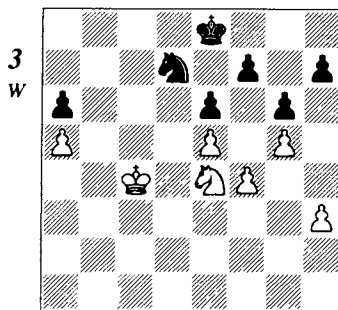
## Exercises



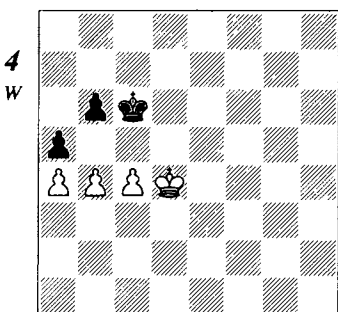
Exchanging pieces is a good idea when you are pawns up so Black played 1...b5 sacrificing the c-pawn and planning to answer 2 ♖xc5 with 2...♗c4+. Was this a good idea?



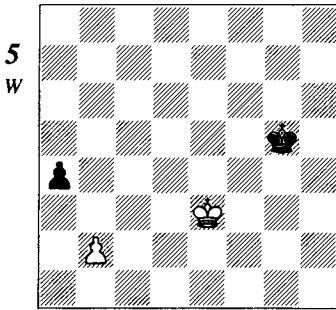
With under a minute left on his clock Black decided to simplify to a king + pawn v king ending with 1...♗xe4. Did this move throw away the win?



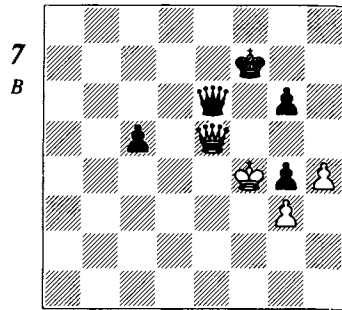
White has a big space advantage and, deciding that a king and pawn ending was the best way of exploiting this, played 1 ♖f6+ ♗xf6 2 exf6. Would you have also taken this approach?



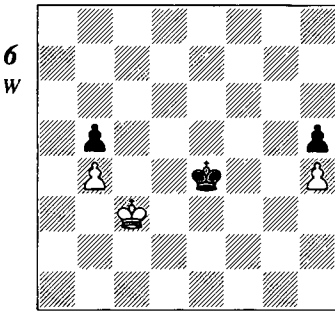
Black has just played ...a6-a5. How would you respond and how confident would you be of winning the position?



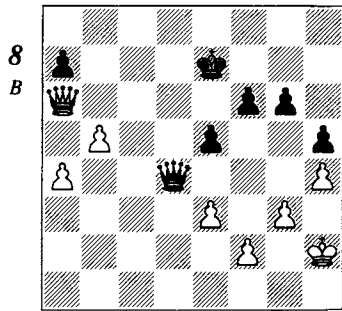
Black's last move was to capture a queen at g5 and was therefore beyond reproach. However, the same cannot be said of all his remaining moves: 1 ♖d4 ♗f6 2 ♜c3 ♘e6 3 ♙b4 ♚d6 4 ♜xa4 ♚c5 5 ♗a5 ♜c6 6 ♖b4 ♜c7 7 ♗a6 1-0. Where would you have improved?



Black has an extra outside passed pawn but if he swaps queens immediately then it will drop off without compensation: 1... ♜xe5+ 2 ♜xe5 c4 3 ♚d4 ♘e6 4 ♜xc4 ♚e5 5 ♚d3 drawing. Instead he found a simple and elegant solution – can you also find it?



White has allowed the black king to infiltrate decisively and duly lost the game: 1 ♜c2 ♚d4 2 ♙b2 ♜c4 3 ♜c2 ♙xb4 4 ♙b2 ♜c4 5 ♜c2 ♖b4 6 ♙b2 ♖b3 7 ♙b1 ♚d4 8 ♙b2 ♘e4 9 ♙xb3 ♘f4 10 ♜c3 ♘g4 11 ♚d3 ♙xh4 12 ♘e3 ♘g3 13 ♘e2 ♘g2 14 ♘e3 ♖h4 0-1. However, errors were made in this sequence. Can you identify them?



Black understandably didn't fancy his chances of holding the queen ending and decided to seek salvation in the king and pawn ending with 1... ♜b6 2 ♜xb6 ♖xb6. After 3 e4 ♚d6 it became apparent that rapid action was required by White to stop Black simply playing ... ♜c5-b4xa4xb5. Any ideas?



## Solutions

1) Huegel-Herzog, *Mannheim wom 1990*

1...b5? was far too impatient but if only Black had changed plans after 2 ♖xc5 then she could still have won: 2...♗b4! would have left her with two connected passed pawns and a theoretical win (see next chapter). However, after 2...♗c4+?? 3 ♖xc4 bxc4 4 ♕c3 it turned out that she had stumbled into the hopelessly drawn ending of king + a-pawn v king. The players agreed on a draw after the sequel 4...♕c6 5 ♕xc4 ♕b6 6 ♕c3 ♕c5 7 ♕b3 ♕b5 8 ♕a3 a4 9 ♕a2 ♕b4 10 ♕b2 a3+ 11 ♕b1 ♕b3 12 ♕a1. Normally, of course, the ending of rook + three connected pawns v rook would be an easy win but Black paid dearly for her eagerness to exchange rooks.

2) Larsen-Ivanchuk, *Monaco rapid 1992*

1...♗xe4! was a clever way to force a quick decision. After 2 ♕xe4 ♕g6! Black has the diagonal opposition and his king is one rank in front of the pawn. To put it another way, we know from diagram 5 that with a pawn at f7 Black always wins if his king reaches e5 or g5. So 3...♕g5 is a threat and after 3 ♕f4 ♕f6 the white king has to give ground and allow his opposite number into e5 or g5. In the game White chose 4 ♕e4 ♕g5 but the end wasn't long coming: 5 ♕f3 ♕f5 6 ♕e3 ♕g4 7 ♕f2 ♕f4 8 ♕e1 ♕e3 9 ♕f1 f5 10 ♕e1 f4 11 ♕f1 ♕f3 12 ♕g1 ♕e2 and Black delivered mate soon afterwards.

3) Munteanu-Sheldon, *Girls U12 Wch 1991*

Exchanging off into a king and pawn ending was an excellent decision because White has a vital reserve tempo (h3-h4) which enables her to seize the opposition. After 1 ♕f6+ ♕xf6 (otherwise the h-pawn drops) 2 exf6 ♕d7 3 ♕c5 ♕c7 Black temporarily took the opposition but after 4 h4! she lost it back again with fatal consequences. The game continued 4...♕d7 5 ♕b6 ♕d6 6 ♕xa6 ♕c6 7 ♕a7 ♕c7 (if the a-pawn were already at a6 then this would draw – unfortunately for Black it isn't) 8 a6 ♕c6 9 ♕b8 1-0.

4) Kosten-Sax, *Hastings 1990/1*

Black's ...a5 was as good or bad as anything else given that his position is lost. Now one simple way to win was 1 bxa5 bxa5 2 c5 followed by ♕d5, c6 and the white king comes over to capture the a-pawn. In the game White chose the equally effective...

1 b5+ ♕d6 2 c5+!

The temporary pawn sacrifice as a way of straightening out a crippled pawn majority cropped up earlier in the chapter.

2...bxc5+ 3 ♕c4 ♕c7 4 ♕xc5 ♕b7

White is a protected passed pawn ahead which, unless there is something very unusual about the pawn structure, is a winning advantage. Now 5 b6 is the obvious move but would be a terrible mistake after 5...♕a6! when White either has to abandon the pawn or force stalemate with 6 ♕c6. Fortunately there is an alternative winning method – if you

imagine that Black has an additional pawn at b6 then White's king would manoeuvre round to c6 and capture both b- and a-pawns. This is effectively what White does in the game.

5 ♖d5 ♗c7 6 ♗e6 ♜b8 7 ♖d6 1-0

In fact 1 ♖c3 was the only plausible move that fails to win: 1...axb4+ 2 ♜xb4 and now 2...♗c7 3 ♜b5 ♜b7 is just one of the ways to draw.

### 5) Lyell-Crawley, *British Ch 1988*

Given that Black loses his pawn anyway he should really have been examining what happens after a quick ...a3 – assuming the pawn is captured at least he will face a relatively harmless rook's pawn rather than a dangerous knight's pawn. In fact, after 1 ♖d4, the immediate 1...a3 2 bxa3 ♗f6 3 ♖d5 would have lost since White's king reaches the critical b7-square. However, after 1...♗f6 2 ♖c3, instead of 2...♗e6??, the timely 2...a3! would have drawn because after 3 bxa3 Black's king easily makes it to c8 whilst 3 b4 ♗e5 4 ♜b3 ♖d5 5 ♗xa3 ♖c6 6 ♗a4 ♜b6 would have left White one tempo short of victory. This was Black's only drawing chance.

### 6) de Pool-Damasco, *Novi Sad wom OL 1990*

Both players made one major blunder in the course of the remaining moves. Black quite reasonably chose to take the b-pawn, although going for the h-pawn instead was an equally valid winning method. After the alternative 1...♗f4 2 ♖c3 ♗g4 3 ♖d4 ♗xh4 4 ♖c5 ♗g5 5 ♜xb5 h4,

etc., Black will promote whilst the white pawn is still only on the seventh. Because the pawn would be a knight's pawn Black could force a fairly easy win (see Chapter 5 for the details). White could also defend passively by moving her king over to block the h-pawn, e.g. 1...♗f4 2 ♖d2 ♗g4 3 ♗e2 ♗xh4 4 ♖f2 but then when the black king runs back over to take the b-pawn she would have to take care of the h-pawn. Black's last pawn would be a knight's pawn so the resultant king + pawn v king ending would be a trivial win. Black's choice in the game, 1...♖d4, restricted her opponent's options but the fact that her last pawn was going to be a rook's pawn did mean that accuracy was still required. Unfortunately this wasn't forthcoming. 1 ♖c2 ♖d4 2 ♜b2 ♖c4 3 ♖c2 ♜xb4 4 ♜b2 ♖c4 5 ♖c2 was a perfectly reasonable sequence but then the unfortunate 5...b4?? should have thrown away the win. I pointed out in my comments to diagram 8 that in this type of position the black king should head for the other side of the board when the white king is as far away from the passed pawn as possible. 5...b4?? unnecessarily brought the pawn nearer the white king whereas 5...♖d4 would have won quite easily. After 6 ♜b2 b3 White found the correct 7 ♜b1! (rather than the losing 7 ♖c1??). Then after the correct sequence 7...♖d4 8 ♜b2 ♗e4 9 ♜xb3, ♗f4 10 ♖c3 ♗g4 11 ♖d3 ♗xh4 she didn't realize that her king should be heading for f1 and blundered horribly with 12 ♗e3??, whereas 12 ♗e2 would have drawn.

After that Black seized her chance to occupy g2 and won without further adventures.

7) **Zarubin-Chuprikov, Voronezh 1991**

1... ♖f6+!

This forces a king and pawn ending on Black's terms because 2 ♖e4 allows the unpleasant 2... ♖f3#.

2 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6

Now after 3 ♖e4 ♔e6 Black simply holds on to his extra pawn. However, White can take on g4 and still stop the c-pawn so he chose to do so.

3 ♔xg4 c4 4 ♔f4 c3 5 ♔e3 ♔f5 0-1

Despite the reduced material it turns out that Black has arranged a neat demonstration of the power of the outside passed pawn. Because White didn't have time for g4 both his kingside pawns will drop off after 6 ♔d3 ♔g4 7 ♔xc3 ♔xg3.

8) **Ramos-Costa, Bauru jr 1986**

White already has the potential to create a passed pawn on the queenside but he also needs one on the kingside in order to overload the black king. Fortunately, all of Black's

pawns there have already moved, which makes this much easier. White continued:

4 f4! ♔c5 5 g4!

5 f5 gxf5 6 exf5 ♔b4 would be less accurate because Black could then ignore White's potential passed pawns and queen his e-pawn, using his king to support, if necessary. White's solution is more violent and therefore more forcing.

5...exf4

There is no defence against White's kamikaze pawns – one of them is sure to promote: 5...hxg4 is met by 6 f5 gxf5 7 h5.

6 g5! fxe5 7 e5! ♔d5 8 a5! bxa5 9 b6

Although White's mass sacrificial breakthrough has left him with just two pawns only two files apart, they are sufficiently far advanced to guarantee a promotion. The game lasted a while longer but Black could have thrown in the towel now.

9...gxe4 10 b7 ♔xe5 11 b8 ♖+ ♔f5 12 ♔h3 g5 13 ♖b5+ ♔g6 14 ♖a6+ ♔f5 15 ♖xa5+ ♔g6 16 ♖e5 g4+ 17 ♔xh4 g3 18 ♖e6+ ♔h7 19 ♔g5 g2 20 ♖f7+ ♔h8 21 ♔h6 1-0

## 2 Rook and pawn endings (pawns on one side of the board)

When I'm giving coaching on endings I always end up quoting Tartakower's aphorism: "All rook and pawn endings are drawn". The message that I'm trying to convey is that if you are trying to exploit a structural or material advantage then, apart from the notorious ending of opposite-coloured bishops, rook endings are the worst type of ending in which to do it. That said, for various reasons they do crop up much more frequently than any other type of ending, which is why I'm devoting two chapters to them. This chapter is concerned with rook endings where the pawns are only on one side of the board.

### Rook + pawn v rook

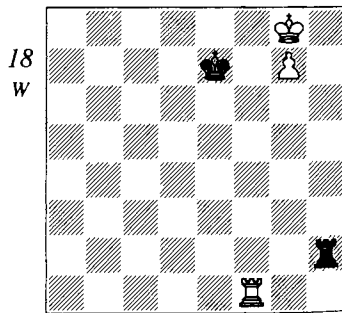
Black's drawing chances in this ending are even better than in king and pawn against king – the key factor is whether the defender's king is in front of the pawn or not – if it is then he should be able to draw easily. Otherwise it may be an uphill struggle.

#### Defender's king cut off from the pawn

I want to look at these positions first to show what the superior side in

rook and pawn v rook is always trying to achieve.

Whilst Black (here meaning the side without a pawn) is trying desperately to blockade the pawn with his king, White's basic idea is to cut off the black king as far as possible from the pawn and then, opposed only by a rook, will advance his own king and pawn to victory. The culmination of this strategy is the so-called 'Lucena position' in which only a minimum of accuracy is still required of White. Thousands of games have been decided this way so I have not quoted an actual game example.



White wins because his pawn has reached the seventh rank and Black's king is cut off

(18) Clearly whatever Black has been doing with his rook to prevent

White's king and pawn from advancing hasn't been very effective. The white king has had to hide in front of the pawn for shelter but all he now needs to do is find a way of withdrawing it from g8 without allowing too many checks. After that the pawn will promote. Although his position is basically hopeless Black's pieces are on their best squares for preventing this withdrawal. His rook is well-placed for this purpose on the h-file and his king is fulfilling the same function on the e-file. For instance, if Black's king were on f6 then White would win immediately with 1 ♔f8. So White starts off by driving the black king further away from the pawn (in practice he will often have done this long before his pawn reaches the seventh):

1 ♖e1+ ♔d7

Now 2 ♔f7 is well answered by 2...♗f2+ 3 ♔g6 ♖g2+ and short of returning to g8 there is no way for White to escape from the checks without losing the g7-pawn. However, although White's rook is currently doing a good job cutting off his opponent's king he can also use it to protect his own king when it emerges:

2 ♖e4!

White wants to move his rook as far up the e-file as possible without it being molested next move by his opponent's king. 2 ♖e5 is answered by 2...♔d6 but if the black king were on d8 then 2 ♖e5 or even 2 ♖e6 (intending 2...♔d7 3 ♔f7 ♗f2+ 4 ♗f6) would be even more accurate alternatives. Had Black tried 1...♔d6 then after 2 ♖e4 the reply 2...♔d5! would have

had nuisance value: White would have needed to find 3 ♖e7! ♔d6 4 ♔f8! for the most convincing win.

2...♔d6

What else?

3 ♔f7

Everything has been carefully prepared for this.

3...♗f2+ 4 ♔g6

4 ♔e8 isn't a short-cut because of 4...♖g2.

4...♖g2+ 5 ♔f6 ♗f2+ 6 ♔g5 ♖g2+ 7 ♖g4

...and White wins.

It's never struck me as being quite the right metaphor but this process of moving the rook up the board and then using it to shelter the king from checks is often referred to as 'building a bridge'.

To avoid having bridges built over the remains of his position the defender needs to act swiftly as soon as his king is cut off.

## Guidelines for playing these positions

### For the defender

The best way to defend these positions is to bring the rook round *to the front of the pawn*.

This gives him two important options:

1) Checking the opposing king away. This can be combined with attacking the pawn and preventing its advance.

2) Taking the same file as the white rook and offering a rook exchange – if the resultant king and

pawn ending is drawn then this approach should draw immediately. If White avoids the exchange then he will have to move his rook away and allow the defender's king to approach the pawn.

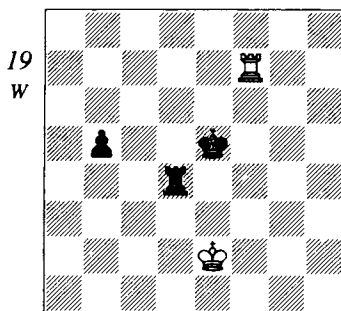
Gligorić-Fischer (diagram 7) is an excellent example of the defender making full use of both these options. At lower levels, however, I often come across players trying to defend with the rook behind the pawn which, in this type of position, is suicidal.

### For the superior side

The superior side must cut off his opponent's king as soon as possible, usually along a file but sometimes along a rank. He should then keep the king cut off for as long as possible: once the defender's king manages to block the pawn it will be almost impossible ever to dislodge it. A frontal attack from a rook on his king and pawn may be awkward but is less effective once the pawn is far advanced. This is because the *checking distance* (i.e. the distance between the king and the checking rook) will be reduced.

Yet paradoxically, the further advanced the pawn is relative to the king, as we've seen, the more likely a king and pawn ending is to be drawn and the more effective an offer of a rook swap by the defender will be. In principle the pawn should be advanced whenever possible but it should always be supported by the king. No one ever seriously claimed that chess was easy but if you know

your king and pawn endings then you have a much better chance of mastering your rook and pawn endings.



### Stokes – Howell (2285)

England 1983

Draw but only if White doesn't hesitate in bringing his rook round to the front of the pawn.

(19) Given that his opponent's king is cut off from the pawn, this particular position isn't a favourable one for Black. White's king is only two files away from the pawn whilst Black's king isn't particularly well placed to support it. However, you have to make the most of what trumps you do have – I had just played ...♖b4-d4 to cut my opponent's king off as quickly as possible and had prayed that he didn't know how to defend.

1 ♖b7?

My prayer was answered. After the correct 1 ♖f1 White is already threatening 2 ♖d1, e.g. 1...♔d5 2 ♖d1 ♜xd1 3 ♔xd1 and Black's king isn't far enough ahead of his pawn to win – see diagram 7 for a similar example. In essence White's plan of bringing his rook round to the first rank and challenging its opposite number

is such a strong one that Black has to try artificial moves to prevent it: Black can try 1...♔e4 because 2 ♔d1? ♔xd1 3 ♔xd1 ♔d3 is decisive but moving the king up the board is not an impressive plan – to make any progress it will have to head for the queenside. Maintaining an active rook is vital in rook endings so 2 ♔h1 would then be the best way of combining this principle with the idea of keeping White's rook on the first rank: it threatens 3 ♔h4+ as well as maintaining the options of ♔d1 and ♔b1. White should draw easily.

1...♔d5!

My opponent had only been expecting 1...b4 when 2 ♔e3 makes Black's position look very unstable: this is a good example of not advancing the pawn because Black's king is not yet around to support it. Now my king can run unhindered over to the queenside.

2 ♔e3

Even now bringing the rook back to c1 via c7 would have been a better chance.

2...♔d6 3 ♔e4 ♔c6 4 ♔b8

4 ♔c7+ ♔xc7 5 ♔xd5 ♔b6 6 ♔d4 ♔a5 7 ♔c3 ♔a4 8 ♔b2 ♔b4 and the black king reaches the sixth rank next move. However, as White I would still have tried to bring my rook round to the front.

4...♔d7 5 ♔c8+

Now the winning process is a straightforward matter of pushing king and pawn to reach the Lucena position whilst White flails around.

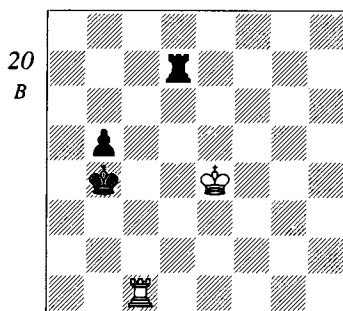
5...♔b6 6 ♔b8+

At the risk of sounding like a broken record I would still have tried 6

♔c1, when 6...b4! is the only move to win: 7 ♔e3 ♔b5 8 ♔b1 ♔c4 9 ♔c1+ ♔b3 10 ♔b1+ ♔c3 11 ♔c1+ ♔b2, etc.

6...♔c5 7 ♔c8+ ♔b4 8 ♔c1 (20)

Even after so much shilly-shallying this move does actually contain some venom.



### Stokes – Howell

England 1983

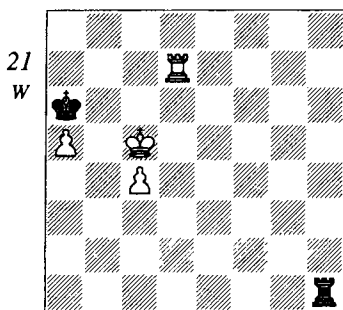
White to play would draw with 9 ♔b1+ ♔c5 (unless the king retreats, White will be able to keep checking) 10 ♔c1+ ♔b6 11 ♔b1! and Black cannot make any further progress. However, if Black is to play, he can seize the chance to minimize the checking distance and win.

8...♔a3! 9 ♔a1+ ♔b2 10 ♔a5 b4 11 ♔b5 b3 12 ♔e3 ♔c2 13 ♔c5+ ♔b1 14 ♔b5 b2 15 ♔a5

Since White hasn't even bothered to put his rook on the eighth rank and extend his checking distance I didn't see the need to do any bridge-building yet.

15...♔c2 16 ♔c5+ ♔b3 17 ♔b5+ ♔c3 18 ♔e2 ♔d4 19 ♔c5+ ♔b3 20 ♔e3 ♔b4 0-1

However, once a pawn has got to the fifth rank supported by the king an attack from the front has little hope of succeeding. By a process of elimination the defender has to look for another approach: there are positions where the defender's rook can operate effectively from the side of the pawn.



**Vogt (2485) – Pähz (2515)**  
*Dresden 1988*

Draw as Black can pick off the a-pawn and then use his rook to conduct an active defence from the 'long side' of the pawn.

(21) Black has managed to reach the notorious ending of rook, rook's pawn and bishop's pawn v rook. The assessment of this ending is a perfect example of why rook and pawn endings are considered to have such drawish tendencies – despite being two clear pawns down the defender can draw with accurate play as long as his king is in front of the pawns. White is a grandmaster and is well aware of this, so he decides to give up his less valuable pawn to misplace Black's king.

1 ♖c6 ♔xa5 2 c5 ♕a6 3 ♚c7

Although Black's king might look unhappy on the a-file, it is still very close to the pawn and is only being held off by White's king (in the Lucena position a rook was cutting it off). Even more importantly, it is on the correct side of the pawn, the so-called 'short side'. There are five files to the right of the pawn and two to the left, so it's obvious why the left-hand side is referred to as the short side, but why should this factor be significant for the defence? Since Black's rook cannot start any kind of frontal attack, his counterplay must consist of checks from the side.

If a rook is trying to give a series of checks, it is advantageous for it to be as far away from the king as possible. Otherwise the king can quickly approach the rook, reduce its checking distance to zero and thereby stop the checks. This is why checks should ideally be given from the long side – h6, h7 and h8 rather than a6, a7 and a8. If we were to move Black's king from a6 to, say, e8 then White's king would not only be sheltered from long-side checks on the eighth rank but would also have the freedom to move to the b-file. Although in both cases the black king is cut off from the pawn I would say there are two basic differences between this type of position and the Lucena position (diagram 18):

1) Black's king is favourably placed on the short side whereas there it was on the long side obstructing the black rook's checks.

2) White's pawn hasn't got as far as the seventh rank.

3...♖h5



It might look odd to encourage the pawn's advance but Black obviously knew that the standard theoretical draw is with the pawn on the sixth so this is what he is aiming for.

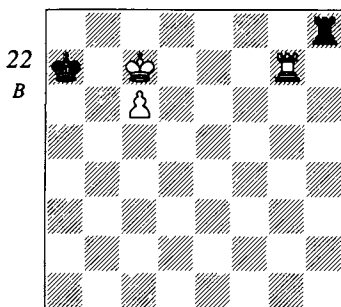
4 c6 ♖h8!

Reaching a standard theoretical position. As you'll see from the game, Black's defence isn't particularly difficult although it's hard to come up with rules covering every eventuality. His rook is best placed at h8 since it prevents White's king reaching the important eighth rank and maintains maximum checking distance. His own king is equally well placed at a7 and a6 so if White maintains the status quo Black will alternate between these two squares. If White moves his king then Black should seize his chance and play ...♙b6 whilst if he retreats his rook and threatens to deliver mate on the a-file then Black delivers a barrage of checks.

5 ♖e7

White could also have tried 5 ♖d8 when Black clearly cannot maintain the status quo. However, now the white rook is so badly placed that Black can allow his king to penetrate to the eighth rank: 5...♞h7+ 6 ♙d6 (6 ♙c8 ♙b6 wins the pawn) 6...♞h6+ (unusually 6...♙b6 is a bad move because 7 ♞b8+ and 8 c7 promotes the pawn) 7 ♙c5 ♞h5+ (forcing even more concessions) 8 ♖d5 ♞h8 (Black has considerably worsened the positions of White's pieces so he returns to his basic defensive structure) 9 ♞e5 ♙a7 10 ♞e7+ ♙a6 (staying close to b6: White has made no progress).

5...♙a7 6 ♞g7 (22)



Vogt – Pähitz

Dresden 1988

Draw as long as Black appreciates that his rook is already optimally placed and uses waiting tactics with his king.

6...♙a6! 7 ♞e7 ♙a7

If you are wondering why White isn't trying anything constructive, it's partly because there is actually very little he can try, but also because he is waiting for Black to lose patience and blunder, standard tactics in this kind of position.

8 ♞e1 ♞h7+

9 ♞a1+ ♙b5 10 ♙b7 followed by 11 c7 was a definite threat so Black starts his barrage of checks.

9 ♙d6 ♞h6+

9...♙b6 was also possible. After 10 ♞b1+ ♙a7 11 c7 White has everything he might want apart from shelter for his king: 11...♞h6+ draws. White could instead try the flashy 10 c7 (intending 10...♞xc7 11 ♞b1+) but then checks from the side are just as effective.

10 ♙d7 ♞h7+ 11 ♞e7 ♞h8 12 ♙c7

## 42 Rook and pawn endings (pawns on one side of the board)

After 12 c7 ♖b7 the only way that White is going to win is by the distinctly unfeasible method of moving his rook to the b-file in one move.

12...♟a6 13 ♖e1 ♜h7+ 14 ♟d6 ♜h6+ 15 ♟d7 ♜h7+ 16 ♜e7 ♜h8 17 ♟d6 ½-½

### Defender's king in front of the pawn

These positions represent Black's aim in the examples above. Once his king is blockading the pawn, as long as Black doesn't allow his king and rook to end up stuck on the back rank, the position should be drawn.

### Winning strategies

1) White's aims are either to generate mating threats and thus tie the black rook to the back rank, or to drive the black king away from the pawn and thereby free the way for its advance.

2) These both involve advancing the white king to the sixth rank. Since Black will usually want to place his rook on this rank himself as a preventative measure, it is often worthwhile anticipating this and putting the white rook there first.

### The drawing technique

1) Put the rook on the third rank and resolve that the white king isn't going to cross it.

2) If White offers an exchange of rooks in an attempt to drive away the black rook then, as long as Black's king is well placed, accepting the

offer should result in a drawn king and pawn ending. White's only other option is to advance his pawn to block the third rank and enable his king to follow. Then, and only then, should Black move his rook to the eighth rank and start checking from behind. The mistake that players usually make is going active too early with their rook and checking from behind when White's king can still shelter in front of his pawn.

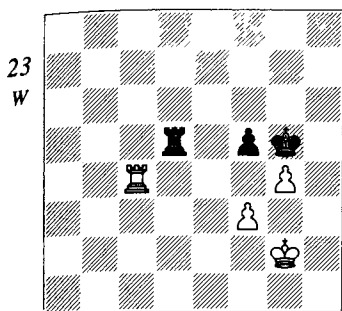
This method of defence was discovered by the great eighteenth-century French musician and chess player Philidor – his contribution to endgame theory was remarkable and this is not the last time that his name will be mentioned in this book. Incidentally, rather than waiting passively on the third rank for the advance of the opposing forces, it is also possible to apply the Philidor method further up the board: if the defender's rook chooses to defend on the fourth rank then his king should be at least on the second rank.

The first practical example is a good example of White's winning strategies in action as Black clearly has no idea about the drawing technique:

(23) A pair of pawns is about to be exchanged and Black's king will be comfortably placed in front of the remaining pawn – so the game is objectively a clear draw.

1 ♟g3 fxg4 2 ♜xg4+

2 fxg4 allows 2...♞d3+ but even if this possibility didn't exist it is sensible to leave an f-pawn rather than a g-pawn on the board. This point will



**Wagneur – Chassagne**

*Paris 1989*

Draw although Black does need to know what he's doing.

become clearer later but the basic idea is that when trying to remove the blockading black king it is useful to be able to attack on the short side (i.e. the h-file) as well as on the long side.

2...♙f5 3 ♖h4 ♜d1 4 ♖h5+ ♙g6 5 ♜c5

I'm not quite sure why White went here rather than to a5. If in doubt I would make the checking distance as great as possible but it doesn't really matter here. However, Black at some point should decide on which rank he is going to employ the Philidor defence. His king is already active so I don't see any reason not to put it into operation immediately on White's fourth rank: 5...♜d4 6 f4 (other than offering the exchange of rooks this is the only way for White's king to make his way to the fourth rank) 6...♜d1 (now the white pawn can't offer any shelter from checks from the back so Black moves his rook to the eighth) 7 ♙g4 (intending 8 ♜c6+) 7...♜g1+ 8 ♙f3

♜f1+ 9 ♙e3 ♜e1+ 10 ♙f2 ♜a1 and only the most stubborn of players would not offer a draw.

5...♜g1+ 6 ♙f4 ♜g2 7 ♜c8

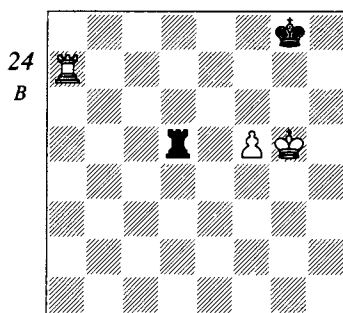
This move doesn't really fit in with White's plan but am I being too cynical if I suggest that the threat of 8 ♜g8+ attracted him?

7...♜a2 8 ♜c6+ ♙f7 9 ♙g4 ♜a4+ 10 f4 ♜d4 11 ♙g5

Around this point Black would normally head for the Philidor defence by putting his rook on the third rank just to make sure that nothing untoward happens. However, White has cleverly arranged for his rook to land there first and now a certain amount of care is required from Black.

11...♜d5+ 12 f5 ♜d7 13 ♜h6 ♜d5 14 ♜h7+ ♙g8 15 ♜a7 (24)

Unfortunately White cannot play the immediate 15 ♙g6 because of 15...♜d6+ 16 f6 ♜xf6+ so he has to take time out to secure his rook on the long side of the pawn.



**Wagneur – Chassagne**

*Paris 1989*

Black to play should draw easily by using Philidor's defence. White to play would win with 16 ♙g6.

**15...♠d8??**

Black's play up to now has been sloppy but this is the critical point where he blunders away the draw. After 15...♠d6! the only constructive move is 16 f6 when 16...♠d1 draws immediately since the white king has no protection against checks from the rear. Philidor was probably turning in his grave at a countryman not knowing his most famous contribution to endgame theory. Black's choice is a perfect example of passive play deservedly losing the game.

**16 ♔g6**

Probably Black saw that his rook will now be tied to the back rank but didn't notice how White could exploit this.

**16...♠c8 17 f6 ♠d8 18 ♠g7+! ♔f8**

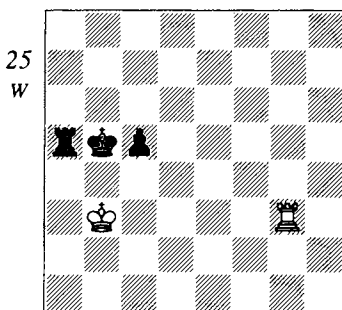
If 18...♔h8 then 19 ♠h7+ ♔g8 20 f7+ ♔f8 21 ♠h8+ wins.

**19 ♠h7 1-0**

Black has no satisfactory defence to 20 ♠h8+ because 19...♔g8 is answered by 20 f7+.

Do you remember the comment to White's second move? If White had a g-pawn here then in spite of Black's careless play, the game would have been drawn – White needs two files to the right of his pawn to drive out the black king. Otherwise the disdainful monarch can simply sit at g8/h8 and look upon any winning attempts by White with contempt.

However, no grandmaster would ever allow anything like this to happen to him. Here is an example of sensible defence:



**Am. Rodriguez (2505) –  
Seirawan (2570)**

*Biel IZ 1985*

Draw as long as White knows  
the Philidor defence

(25) Black has just captured a pawn on a5, which is why his rook is on such an odd square. White's pieces, however, are well-placed for defensive purposes and he could play 1 ♠g4 and set up Philidor's defence on his fourth rank. Instead he prefers to maintain the status quo and defend along the third rank:

**1 ♠h3 c4+ 2 ♔b2 ♔b4 3 ♔b1 ♠g5  
4 ♠f3 ♠g1+ 5 ♔c2 ♠g2+ 6 ♔c1 ♠e2**

Black's pieces have now reached their best squares so he starts making waiting moves hoping to provoke a mistake. For instance 7 ♔d1 would now have been slightly inaccurate since then Black could have tried 7...♠b2 and 8...♠b3 driving White's rook away from the comfort of the third rank. 6...♠a2 and 7...♠a3 would not have had the same effect because White could have exchanged into a drawn king and pawn ending.

**7 ♠h3 ♔c5 8 ♠h5+ ♔d4 9 ♠h4+ ♔c3 10 ♠h3+ ♔b4 11 ♠g3 ♠a2 12 ♠h3**

Once White's rook is on the third rank the defence is very easy.

12...c3 13 ♖h8 ½-½

Black's king is defenceless against the series of checks on the back rank.

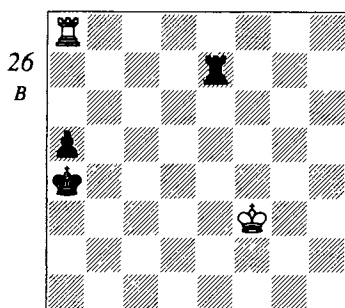
### Rook + rook's pawn v rook

As you might expect, the likelihood of a draw here is high – with Black's king in front of the pawn it's hard even to find examples of anyone bothering to play on. There is no need for any of Philidor's finesses since Black can just defend with his rook on the same rank as his king knowing that neither can ever be ejected.

When Black's king isn't in front of the pawn, White still doesn't have it all his own way – for him to win a Lucena-type position the black king has to be cut off at the ridiculously long distance of four files. If the white king is trying to emerge from a8 behind a pawn on a7 he only has one file to aim for (the b-file) whereas in the Lucena position he always has two (the e- and g-files in the case of an f-pawn, for example). Building a bridge on the fourth rank might have sufficed there but here the superior side has to take out three tempi and build a more substantial bridge on the eighth rank so that his king can escape to the b-file:

(26) 1...♖b4 2 ♖b8+ ♔a3 3 ♖b5

A frontal defence is useless since Black's king and pawn are already too far advanced – the checking distance isn't great enough, nor is ♖f2 and ♖b1-e1 quick enough. As it is



Sax (2545) – Plaskett (2435)

Lugano 1986

Black wins despite having a rook's pawn since the defender's king is cut off by four files.

hard for an a-pawn to shelter the black king from checks from the side, Sax must have also considered bringing his rook round to the d-file but again the checking distance is too short. In fact the rook's pawn does help the superior side in one respect – the defending king can never head for the short side because there is no short side. The white king is just an obstruction at f3 and is preventing White from even trying any long-distance checks.

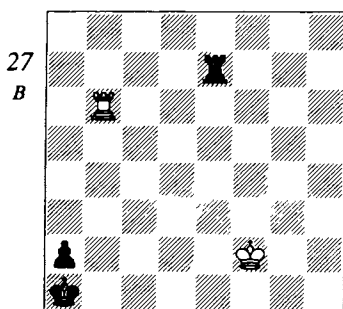
3...a4 4 ♖b8

Sax could have thrown in the towel here since he doesn't have any kind of defensive plan. However, the game was played in the last round of a big open tournament and losing it must have been an expensive and painful experience.

4...♔a2 5 ♖f2 a3 6 ♖b6 ♔a1 7 ♖b8 a2 8 ♖b6 (27)

8...♖c7

8...♖h7 and 9...♖h1 comes to the same thing.



**Sax – Plaskett**

*Lugano 1986*

Black wins by transferring his rook to his eighth rank and driving the white rook off the b-file without allowing White's king to reach c2, i.e. he has to find the quickest route to b1.

9 ♖e2 ♜c1

One junior that I was teaching tried 9...♜c2+?? 10 ♖d3 ♜b2 11 ♜h6 when I tested him on this position but fortunately he spotted the impending disaster (11...♖b1?? 12 ♜h1#) and backtracked.

10 ♖d3

This is a standard theoretical position and 10 ♖d2 is generally reckoned to ease Black's task: 10...♜b1 11 ♜a6 ♖b2 12 ♜b6+ ♖a3 13 ♜a6+ ♖b3 14 ♜b6+ ♖c4 and Black wins.

10...♜b1 11 ♜h6 ♖b2

White's king never did make it to c2 but he can still try a few final tricks:

12 ♜b6+

The point of 10 ♖d3 is that White now has c4 covered. This prevents the black king from escaping via the a- and b-files.

12...♖c1 13 ♜c6+ ♖d1 14 ♜h6

Black has avoided the checks but White is now threatening mate in one. I suspect that most players could work out the win over the board but it does help to have memorized the winning procedure, especially in a quick-play finish situation. I'm sure that Plaskett was bashing his moves out around here.

14...♜b3+ 15 ♖c4 ♜c3+! 16 ♖b4

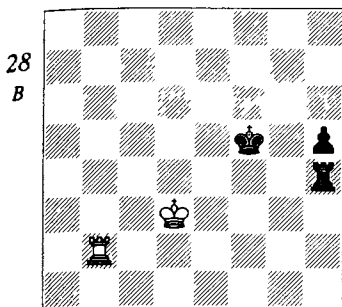
And after playing so well for so long Black still has to find one more accurate move. Do try to avoid being left with a rook's pawn if you want easy wins!

16...♜c1! 0-1

If Sax's king had been at e1 or e2 in the original diagram then it would have been too close to c2 for Black to have had any winning chances: chasing White's rook off the b-file is useless if the price is letting White's king reach c2 or c1.

This does not mean, however, that the defender is guaranteed a draw if his king comes within three files of a rook's pawn. In the notes to Stokes-Howell above I briefly mentioned the idea of cutting the defender's king off along a rank and this idea is just as valid in rook's pawn positions. I found an interesting example where Salov does this and successfully uses the same rook to shelter his king from checks:

(28) In principle White should be drawing this position since his king is fairly close to the pawn whilst Black's pieces don't look very favourably placed: his pawn is only on the fourth rank and is being blocked by his rook whilst his king isn't particularly active. However, this is one



**Lautier (2645) – Salov (2660)**  
*Madrid 1993*

Black to play wins because he is able to cut the white king off along a rank.

of those positions where everything hinges on whose move it is:

**1...♖h3+! 2 ♔d4**

Alas, alas, the white king has to walk away from the action. He would love to go to e2 but then 2...♖h2+ picks up the unfortunately placed rook at b2. If White's rook were on b1 in the original position then the game would be a clear draw because his king could not be effectively cut off.

**2...♖a3!**

This rook prevents White's king returning to the third rank and the black king stops it edging along the fourth or fifth ranks. In the meantime both pieces are supporting the advance of the pawn whilst the rook is ready to swing over should the black king need protection against checks. The rook could have gone to g3 or f3 but then the free movement of the black king would have been impeded. In the game Black's co-ordination is perfect and Lautier doesn't

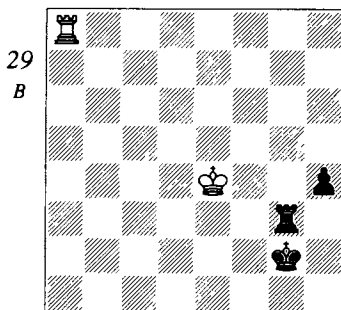
manage to hinder the smooth advance of king and pawn.

**3 ♖f2+ ♔g4 4 ♔e4 ♔g3 5 ♖f8 h4**  
**6 ♖g8+ ♔f2 7 ♖f8+ ♔g2 8 ♖g8+**

If Black's rook were at f7, cutting the king off along the file, then White could rush his king back to e2 and reach a much more favourable version of the game Sax-Plaskett.

**8...♖g3 9 ♖a8! (29)**

Maintaining the option of checks from the back but also threatening some nasty checks from the side.



**Lautier – Salov**  
*Madrid 1993*

Black to play wins despite the 'unfavourable' rook's pawn because of his beautiful co-ordination and the unfortunate position of the white king. First he has to deal with the threat of checks from the side.

**9...♖f3!!**

Salov is equal to the challenge: I never was into maths but I do like the geometry of this move – it keeps White's king at arm's length but also gives Black's king three safe squares at f2, g2 and g3. And once the black

king feels secure, the pawn can carry on running.

10 ♖g8+ ♔f2! 11 ♖a8 h3 12 ♖a7

Good players hate resigning without at least setting one last evil trap: 12...h2?? 13 ♖a2+ ♔g3 14 ♖xh2!.

12...♔g2 13 ♖h7 ♖g3 0-1

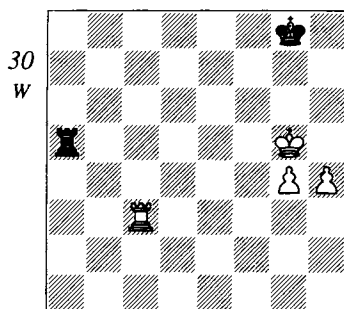
Black avoided the last snare: 13...h2?? 14 ♖xh2+.

This was a difficult example but I wanted to show that if cutting the defender's king off along the file looks like a non-starter there is an alternative – cutting it off along the rank. And it also shows that dynamic factors like co-ordination can be more important than static factors such as that supposedly disadvantageous rook's pawn.

## Rook + two pawns v rook

Two extra pawns! It sounds a lot, especially with so few pieces on the board but life is never that simple, particularly in rook endings: the defender can always fight on. Remember that Kasparov blundered and allowed Short a drawing continuation in a winning rook and two pawns v rook ending during the 1993 PCA World Championship but the English grandmaster missed it. The most favourable version for the superior side is if the pawns are connected but even here there may be work to do:

(30) A pair of connected passed pawns represent a huge advantage but by now you must have realized that rook's pawns can spell trouble. When facing a rook's pawn and a



**Pähtz (2470) – Michalchak (2290)**  
*Berlin Open 1995*

White wins although some care is required.

knight's pawn, the defender can always hope: just when the pawns are about to promote is also the point when the dangers of stalemate are greatest. As soon as Black's king runs out of moves, he can look for flashy ways to sacrifice his rook and force a draw.

The winning plan is (assuming you have g- and h-pawns):

1) Make sure your king is supporting the pawns and that your rook is active.

2) Advance the pawns cautiously without letting the black king wedge itself between them: this usually involves moving the h-pawn up first and then the g-pawn alongside it.

3) Push the pawns to g6 and h6 without allowing too many checks.

4) This should force the black rook to the back rank. Then the simplest win is to play h7 (and rook to the seventh if the black king has gone to g7) followed immediately by ♔h6. Unstoppable mate should follow next move.



The defender just has to sit tight and keep his eyes open for stalemate chances when a pawn has reached the seventh rank or when White's rook goes to g7. Since it is almost impossible for White to win without moving his pawns to g6 and h6 it is worth trying to prevent this – see Black's eighth move in this example. Once the pawns have reached g6 and h6 White's simplest winning plan is to play h7 so it might be an idea to keep the king on h8 rather than g8 to discourage this. From the diagram, play proceeded as follows:

1 ♔g6 ♖a6+ 2 ♕h5 ♗a7

Those checks didn't last very long – the two pawns are excellent protection for the white king.

3 g5

Stage 1 of the plan has already been fulfilled so White moves on to stage 2 – because his king is blocking the h-pawn White chooses to move the g-pawn first.

3...♔g7 4 ♖c4

Taking it slowly, an approach of which I approve since it increases the psychological pressure on Black. The idea is to play ♔g4 without allowing the annoying check at a4.

4...♗b7 5 ♔g4 ♗a7 6 h5 ♗b7 7 h6+

This is a perfect example of a position where moving the g-pawn first would be inaccurate: 7 g6 ♕h6 and White's nightmare scenario has arisen: Black's king is wedged between the pawns and it isn't easy to dislodge.

7...♕h7

Unfortunately for Black g6 is a much less effective blockading square

than h6: 7...♔g6 is answered by 8 ♖c6+.

8 ♕h5 ♗b5

White was actually threatening mate in two with 9 g6+ and 10 ♖c8#.

9 ♖c7+ ♔g8 10 ♗e7

No need to hurry – White wants to play ♔g6 but builds his bridge first. 10 h7+?? would be an impatient mistake and shows why Black shouldn't give up hope yet: 10...♕h8 11 ♕h6 (threatening 12 ♗e8# and preparing g5-g6-g7). Because Black's king is completely stalemated, it's time to let your imagination run riot and work out the best way to give up the black rook. 11...♗xg5 allows 12 ♖c8+ so a check is necessary: 11...♗b6+ 12 ♕h5 (12 g6 ♗xg6+!) and now because White's threat has disappeared both 12...♗h6+! and 12...♗b7! will draw.

10...♗a5 11 ♔g6

Planning ♔f6 and g6.

11...♗a6+ 12 ♔f5 ♗a5+ 13 ♔f6 ♗a6+ 14 ♗e6 ♗a8 15 g6 ♗f8+ 16 ♔g5

Stage 3 has been accomplished so White moves in for the kill.

16...♗a8 17 h7+ ♔h8

Even if Black's king were already on h8 and it were his move in this position, he would still be completely helpless since ...♗a5+ can be answered by ♕h6. It's true that Black's king would be stalemated but after his one check, ...♗h5+, the stalemate is lifted by ♔xh5.

18 ♔h6 1-0

Two connected passed pawns supported by a king really are a fearsome force. For instance, as long as

the white rook is actively placed Black would still have lost this example with a queenside pawn. Even if Black's king were able to run to the queenside in order to support this pawn, his rook would be overwhelmed by the firepower of the king and pawns.

## **More pawns: White has an extra pawn**

### **White doesn't have a passed pawn**

In general Black should be heading for these positions if he's a pawn down in a rook and pawn ending: White has many more possibilities with pawns on both sides of the board. Often the defender can turn a theoretically lost position into a theoretical draw by liquidating all the pawns on one side of the board. However, even if these positions are objectively drawn they can be unpleasant for the defender if he doesn't know what he's doing. As one might expect White is reckoned to have better winning chances the more pawns there are on the board; for example, 4 v 3 on the kingside should give White more options than 2 v 1.

#### **1) For the superior side:**

1a) Cut your opponent's king off on a file and do it a long way away from his pawns if possible.

1b) Don't worry about your own king being cut off – because Black usually can't afford to exchange

rooks it should be possible to drive his rook away with your own rook.

1c) Creating a passed pawn just for its own sake is not usually a good idea because it involves exchanging pawns. It's only worth doing if the result will be a high-status passed pawn, i.e. one that is supported by another pawn or is far advanced and supported by a king.

1d) Assuming Black's king has not been cut off, advance your pawns as far as possible without crippling your majority or over-exposing your king. It may be worthwhile doing this fairly quickly to stop Black setting up his ideal defensive pawn structure (f7, g6, h5 or g6, h5). Pawn exchanges will probably be a necessary price to pay for this but swapping rook's pawns is never such a bad idea anyway. Exchanges only seriously damage your winning chances if they leave you with just one pawn left.

1e) Once your pawns have reached their ideal positions (e.g. f5 and e5 against a black pawn at f7) then it may be worth manoeuvring around a little with your king to see if it can infiltrate (here, for instance, f6 would be an ideal square). This isn't usually feasible so White tends to end up playing a pawn to f6. This should give Black a lot to worry about – a white rook coming in round the back or the pawn break e5-e6 creating a passed pawn on the sixth rank.

#### **2) For the defending side:**

2a) Don't allow your king to be cut off from the pawns along a file – if

nothing else White may simply be able to liquidate down to a winning rook + pawn v rook ending.

2b) Having your king cut off on the back rank isn't necessarily so bad and may even be better than charging forward and allowing it to be separated from your pawns. If White's rook is sitting on the seventh rank then it's not going to be sheltering his own king or helping it advance.

2c) If you can swap pawns without making concessions then do so.

2d) If it looks as though White is advancing his pawns and depriving his king of shelter then activate the rook and try to exploit this with a barrage of checks.

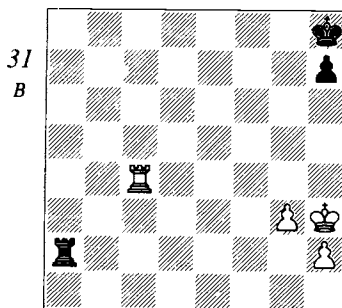
2e) Try to set up a solid pawn structure that stops White advancing his pawns unhindered. This means f7, g6 and h5 if Black has three pawns, g6 and h5 if he has two and putting a pawn on his third rank if he has one.

I would say that of these points defenders most commonly neglect point '2e' because unlike the others it is not really a principle that can be worked out over the board.

Enough abstraction – here's a concrete example:

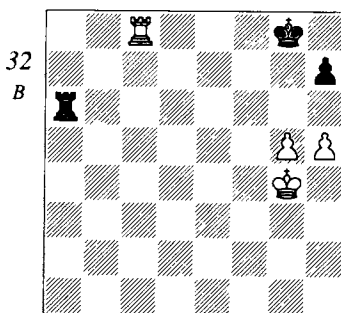
(31) In fact this position should be an easy draw: Black's king isn't cut off from his pawn, White only has two pawns left and one of them is a rook's pawn. But look what happens:

1...♙g7 2 ♜c5 ♙g6 3 g4 ♜b2 4 ♙g3 ♜b3+ 5 ♙h4 ♜b2 6 ♜c6+ ♙g7 7 h3 ♜b4 8 ♙h5 ♜b5+ 9 g5 ♜b3 10 ♜c7+ ♙g8 11 h4 ♜b6 12 ♜c2 ♙g7 13



**Klein – Stein**  
Germany 1986  
Draw

♜c4 ♜a6 14 ♙g4 ♜b6 15 h5 ♜a6 16 ♜c7+ ♙g8 17 ♜c8+ (32)



**Klein – Stein**  
Germany 1986

Draw but Black's position has deteriorated compared to diagram 31 and he has to display some accuracy.

17...♙g7 18 h6+ ♙f7 19 ♜h8 ♜a4+

19...♙g6 20 ♜g8+ ♙f7 21 ♜g7+ wins.

20 ♙h5 ♜b4 21 ♜xh7+ 1-0

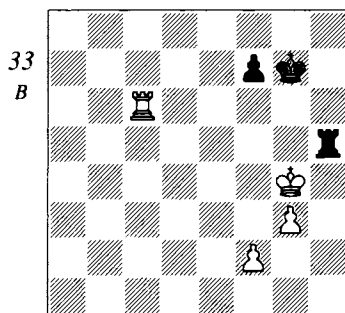
That all looked very smooth. So what did Black do wrong? Basically,

he ignored points '2c', '2d' and '2e' in my recommendations for the defender! Putting the pawn on h6 (point '2e') early on would have been a useful safety precaution to avoid White's pawns advancing so far. Black obviously thought he was defending a version of the Philidor position except with more pawns on the board which explains why he just left his rook on the third rank. Why, oh why, then did he not seize his chance to swap off a pair of pawns with 14...h6 ('2c')? Then he could have reached a proper Philidor position and drawn it with ease. Having missed this chance he needed to produce a couple of accurate moves to draw. Whilst the pawn is at h4 the king has a beautiful hiding place on h5 but as soon as White played h5 I would have responded in accordance with point '2d' and moved my rook to the eighth rank to threaten a barrage of checks. Probably White would have had to use his rook to shield his king but that would have involved it going passive and hence reduced the danger to Black's king. However, the real howler was 17...♔g7??, after which the position changes from being completely drawn (still) to completely lost. If Black had thought about what his opponent was trying to do then he wouldn't have made this mistake. Point '1e' tells you that White's pawns have reached their ideal position and since it's not going to be feasible to reach h6 with his king (the only route would be via i5 but most chessboards have only eight files) he will have to move his pawn to h6. 17...♔g7?? allows this

move with check and thus gives away a vital tempo. After 17...♔f7 18 h6 the white king has nowhere to hide as long as Black checks from the back. 18...♚a1! draws: 19 ♖h8 (19 ♜c7+ ♔g8 20 ♖g7+ ♔h8 is no help) 19...♜g1+ 20 ♔f4 ♜f1+ 21 ♔e3 ♔g6 (White's king is so badly placed that Black will win the g-pawn in return for the doomed h-pawn) 22 ♜g8+ ♔h5 23 ♜g7 ♜f5 24 g6 ♔xh6 with a draw.

As for White's technique, I found it quite impressive – he advanced his king and pawns without allowing annoying checks, he manoeuvred around a little to confuse Black (moves 12 and 13) before making his final push, and, having recognized that the plan of h6 was his only hope of victory, he seized his chance with moves 17 and 18.

This is how these positions should be defended:



Hjartarson (2590) –  
Korchnoi (2640)  
Saint John Ct (7) 1988  
Draw

(33) This position should give White slightly more chances than the previous example since there are no rook's pawns involved. Hjartarson starts mobilizing his pawns and hopes for the best.

1...♠a5 2 f4 ♠b5 3 ♚h4 ♠b7!

Although Korchnoi could draw this position in his sleep he is trying to play the most precise moves. He is going to play ...f6 (in accordance with '2e') but wants to wait for White to commit himself (i.e. play g4 and threaten g5) before doing so. Before playing ...f6, however, it is useful to cover the second rank and prevent White checking there.

4 g4 f6 5 ♚h5 ♠a7 6 ♠b6 ♠c7 7 ♠a6 ♠b7

As Black's pawn is at f6 White's pawns are already in their ideal position (f4 and g4). According to guideline '1e' above he should either be trying to reach f5 with his king or push his pawn to f5. In fact his king is already quite well placed so Hjartarson goes for the second plan:

8 f5 ♠c7

If Black were ever to move his rook off the second rank then he would lose immediately to a check followed by ♚g6 – even 8...♠b4 would allow 9 ♠a7+ ♚g8 10 g5! fxg5 11 ♚g6! when the g-pawn shelters White's king from checks from the back whilst the f-pawn will shelter it from the side. However, since White has no way of improving his position, Black has no need to activate his rook.

9 g5 fxg5 10 ♚xg5

Although he's achieved a moral victory by persuading White to take

off another pair of pawns, Korchnoi still has to be careful because he hasn't managed to set up the Philidor defence (the second rank is too far back to set it up). He could defend by moving his rook to the back rank and then making sure his king goes to the short side when it's evicted (as in Vogt-Pähtz earlier in the chapter) but he has spotted that in this particular position, even with an f-pawn, White doesn't have room to the right of the pawn to drive out his king.

10...♠b7 11 ♠g6+ ♚f8 12 ♠f6+

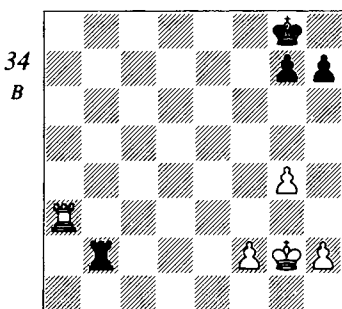
And Hjartarson decided that playing on was pointless and offered a draw. 12 ♠h6 would have been more thematic but White's checking distance is so short, and his rook so bizarrely placed that I can't even see what he's threatening: ♚g6 can always be answered by ...♠g7+.

### White has a passed pawn

If this pawn is isolated then White's winning chances will be minimal. If, on the other hand it is supported by another pawn, then his practical winning chances are quite good:

(34) At the moment White has a standard 3 v 2 ending with no passed pawn and his theoretical winning chances are not so great. However, as we shall see, practice is another matter altogether. Black has just managed to liquidate the last pair of queenside pawns and was probably feeling quite pleased with himself. Still White has managed to clamp down on any attempt by Black to reach his ideal set-up (g6 and h5).

1...g5?!

**Khenkin (2530) – Ward (2455)***Gausdal 1992*

Draw but White's chances improve considerably if he can swap his h-pawn for Black's g-pawn.

Black decides to head for an alternative formation with pawns at g5 and h6. In theory this is a lovely idea: if he could achieve it, then White's majority would be crippled. Unfortunately it has a tactical drawback. The immediate 1...h5 was an interesting alternative that would have forced a decision from White since allowing ...hxg4 would be a major concession. After 2 gxh5?! White's pawns are too weak for him to have serious winning chances but 2 g5! is more dangerous: the whole point of the ...g6 and ...h5 set-up is to prevent White advancing his pawns too far without allowing exchanges. Because White has already pushed his pawn to g5 and can play to undermine Black's structure with f4-f5 I would say he does have practical chances. 1...g6 was a possibility but leaves Black's king somewhat immobile if White puts a rook on the seventh rank. Therefore I would go

for 1...h6 as being the best of the bunch.

2 ♖a5! h6 3 h4!

A fine temporary pawn sacrifice which swaps off White's rook's pawn, and gives him a passed f-pawn that's supported by its neighbour. Black is just a tempo too slow: if his king were already on g7 then 3...♔g6 would have been a good, solid answer.

3...gxh4 4 ♜h5 ♔g7 5 ♜xh4

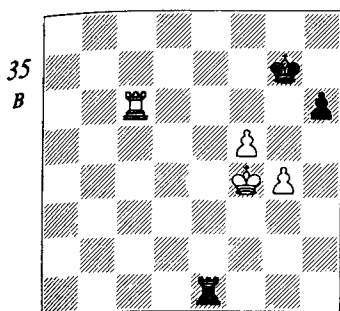
The inactivity of White's rook is only temporary. In the next few moves he consolidates and starts to improve his position.

5...♔g6 6 ♜h5 ♜b4 7 ♔g3 ♜b3+ 8 f3 ♜b4 9 ♜c5 ♜b3 10 ♜d5

The d-file is often a good location for the white rook in this kind of position because it is close enough to the kingside to protect White's king from checks but also far enough away to give him a reasonable checking distance to the black king.

10...♜a3 11 ♔f4 ♜a4+ 12 ♔e3 ♜a3+ 13 ♔e4 ♜a4+ 14 ♜d4 ♜a1 15 f4 ♜e1+ 16 ♔f3 ♜f1+ 17 ♔g2 ♜a1 18 ♜d6+ ♔g7 19 ♔f3 ♜e1 20 ♜c6 ♜e8 21 ♜c7+ ♔f6 22 ♜c6+ ♔g7 23 f5 ♜e1 24 ♔f4 (35)

Black faces the problem that his king needs to defend the h-pawn but also prevent White's king and f-pawn from advancing too far: if his pawn were at f6 then his king could happily sit at e7/f7 and do both jobs. He has sensibly kept his rook on the e-file to prevent White's king from infiltrating but now the strain of constant defence tells. White has done some manoeuvring around and even repeated moves, a standard part of

**Khenkin – Ward***Gausdal 1992*

Draw but Black's task is harder than in diagram 34 because he now has a potentially weak h-pawn and faces a well-supported passed f-pawn.

the technique of trying to win these positions. I know from bitter (and occasionally sweet) personal experience how unpleasant it is when an opponent repeats a position that he's trying to win – it's hard to avoid a flicker of hope that he can't see any way of making progress and is about to concede a draw. However, people who repeat like this are usually gearing themselves up for another 40 moves of sadism. At the same time White's play has also been very constructive: his pawns have advanced as far as they can without losing touch with each other whilst his king and rook are very active.

**24...♞e2?**

There are many positions where you have to use a combination of passive defence and active counter-play to defend and the balance of the two is very difficult to find, especially when it's not always clear

what is meant by 'active counter-play'. In general in this kind of position where White's king has minimal shelter from the side or the back, a1 is an excellent square for the rook as it gives maximum checking distance for checks both along the rank and the file. Chris Ward would have been well aware of this but overestimated the importance of controlling the e-file. It turns out that another benefit of 24...♞a1! is that the rook could switch back to a7 next move and revert to passive defence in reply to, say, 25 ♔e5. In fact, 24...♞e7 immediately would be a very sensible move were it not for the fact that it loses a rook to 25 f6+. However, lessening Black's checking distance has immediate and catastrophic consequences:

**25 ♞c7+! ♔f6**

25...♔g8 26 f6! and White's king is about to infiltrate either via g6 or e6.

**26 ♞h7**

If Black's rook were still at e1 then 26...♞f1+ 27 ♔g3 ♞h1 28 ♔g2 ♞h4 would hold but now 26...♞f2+ allows 27 ♔g3.

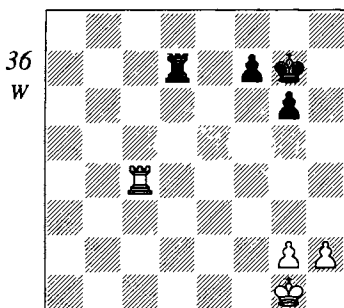
**26...♞h2 27 ♞xh6+!**

But not the appalling howler 27 g5+?? hxg5+ and Black wins.

**27...♞xh6 28 g5+ 1-0**

The king and pawn ending is easily winning because of the offside position of Black's king when he captures the h-pawn. This example is a good illustration of the great difficulties Black faces when White has a supported passed pawn: although 1...g5?! wasn't a losing move, it was an unfortunate practical choice.

All the other examples in this chapter have featured material imbalance. In this last game, however, not only is the material equal but the initial position is completely drawn. Because I am emphasizing the practical aspects of endings in this book I decided to include it as inspiration: it shows that the theoretical assessment of a position is irrelevant if one player is sufficiently determined and his opponent sufficiently intimidated.



**Guyard (2180) – J. Armas (2435)**  
*French League 1993*  
 Draw (although you don't need me to tell you that)

(36) A sharp Benoni has fizzled out to this dead-drawn position but Black (an IM) obviously wasn't yet in the mood to face his team captain. White must have wondered why his opponent was playing on.

1 ♖f2 ♗d3 2 ♛c6 f5 3 ♛e6 ♖h6 4 ♛b6 ♖h5 5 ♛b2 ♛a3 6 ♛c2 ♖g4 7 ♛b2 ♛a4 8 ♛c2 g5 9 ♛b2 ♖f4 10 ♛c2 ♖e4 11 ♛e2+ ♖f4 12 ♛b2 g4

Clearly the position is still a complete draw although White's decision not to touch his pawns has been

a little bizarre. Now g3 by White at any point would leave Black with absolutely no reason even to consider playing on.

13 ♛c2 ♛a3 14 ♛c4+ ♖e5 15 ♛c5+ ♖e4 16 ♛c4+ ♖d5 17 ♛b4 ♖e5 18 ♛b5+ ♖f4 19 ♛b4+ ♖g5 20 ♛b5 ♛a1

For some reason this move, which almost threatens to win a pawn with 21...♛h1, provokes White into some strange moves. 21 g3 is still the simplest way to draw.

21 ♖g3 ♛a2 22 h4+

This is slightly eccentric and complicates matters unnecessarily. Even though g3 is an odd square for the white king, Black wasn't threatening anything: a move like 22 ♛c5 would have been fine. This is one of those positions where White can do almost anything and still draw easily: 22 h3?! ♛a3+ wins a pawn but after 23 ♖f2 (however 23 ♖h2?? does allow mate in three with 23...g3+!) 23...gxf3 24 gxf3 ♛xh3 25 ♛b4 White sets up Philidor's defence along the fourth rank.

22...♖g6

The problem with 23 h5+ now is that Black can play 23...♖g5 and then bring his rook round to the h-file to pick up the impudent pawn. Even then the position is still drawn but I'm sure Black would have fancied his chances.

23 ♛c5 ♛a3+ 24 ♖f4 ♛a4+ 25 ♖g3 ♛a1 26 ♖f4 ♛h1

Black still isn't doing anything after 27 ♖g3, for instance, as White's king and rook are still actively placed. White's only worry is that his pawns are a bit weak and if he tries to

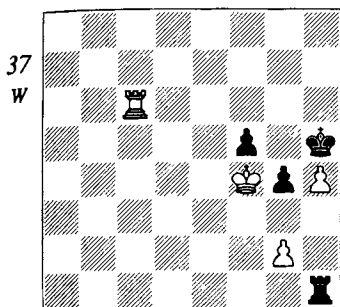


solidify them with g3 then the g-pawn could drop off.

27 ♖c6+

Avoiding 27 ♖xf5?? ♖f1+ but now White does have to produce one or two accurate moves.

27...♔h5 (37)



### Guyard – Armas

*French League 1993*

Draw although White has unnecessarily complicated matters since the previous diagram

28 ♖c8??

Trying to be too clever but I suspect that White was losing patience. He also loses after 28 ♔xf5 ♖f1+ 29 ♔e4 ♔xh4 30 ♖c2 (30 ♖c3 ♖g1) 30...♔g3 – his king is cut off and the g2-pawn can't be held. However, after 28 ♖f6! suddenly Black would have been under pressure because after 28...♖xh4 29 ♖xf5+ his g-pawn will drop off and 28...♖f1+ 29 ♔g3! is zugzwang! Pushing hard in drawn positions can sometimes be a dangerous business but this position is so drawn that even in these two lines

Black can draw fairly comfortably. Now White is lost.

28...♖f1+!

White must have forgotten about this intermediary check: 29 ♔g3 allows mate in three so White has to abandon the h-pawn.

29 ♔e3 ♔xh4

The loss of the h-pawn is not in itself so serious but in conjunction with Black's advanced pawns and active king it does mean that White is lost. To make matters worse, White's king is cut off from the pawns. The most stubborn defence would have been 30 ♔e2 ♖a1 31 ♖c3 (to prevent ...♔g3) 31...f4 32 ♔f2. Clearly the white position belongs in intensive care but the win requires a surprising amount of finesse. Black's rook can come round the back to win the g-pawn but the white rook can also head round the back and annoy the black king, for example 32...g3+ 33 ♔e2 ♖g1 34 ♔f3 ♖f1+ 35 ♔e4 ♖f2? 36 ♖c8 ♖xg2?? 37 ♔f5! and Black can't avoid mate. If you can spot how Black can improve on this variation and win then you are a genius, pure and simple. This position is given as one of the exercises at the end of the chapter.

30 ♖c2?

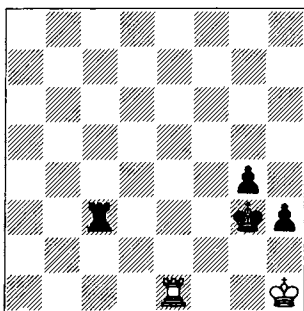
Allowing Black's king into g3 and making things easy.

30...♔g3 31 ♖e2 f4+ 32 ♔e4 ♖f2 0-1

33 ♖xf2 ♔xf2 34 ♔xf4 seems to draw at first sight but 34...g3! carries the day.

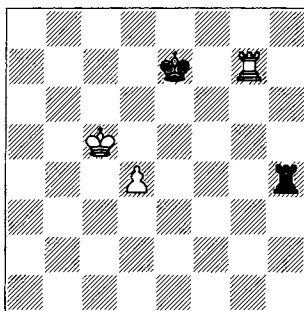
## Exercises

9  
B



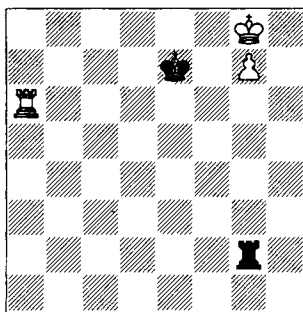
Black played 1...h2 preparing for 2...♔h3 and 3...g3 whilst the white rook is tied to the back rank. Was this a good winning plan?

11  
B



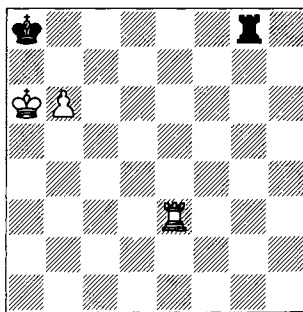
White's pieces are actively placed but do you think it was really necessary for Black to lose in just eight more moves? The game concluded 1...♔d8 2 d5 ♔h1 3 ♔c6 ♔a1 4 ♔g8+ ♔e7 5 d6+ ♔f7 6 d7 ♔c1+ 7 ♔b5 ♔b1+ 8 ♔c4 1-0.

10  
W

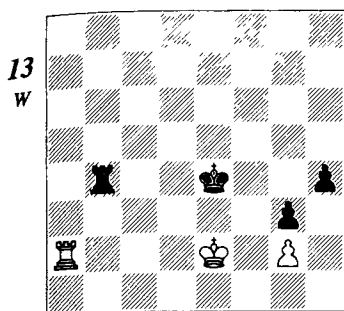


White has advanced his pawn to the seventh but couldn't find a good way to extricate his king. The game continued 1 ♔h6 ♔g1 2 ♔h7 ♔f7 3 ♔h2 ♔xg7+ 4 ♔h6 and having lost his pawn White had little choice but to agree to a **draw**. Would you have done any better?

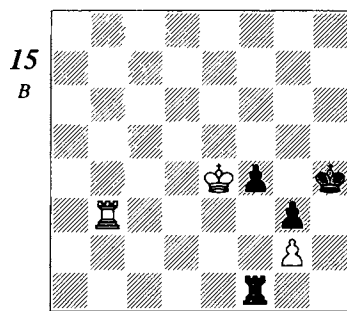
12  
W



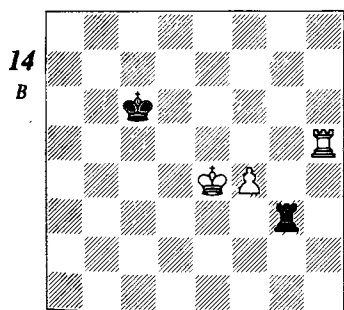
Compared to the previous example White's pieces are even more actively placed. However, the game quickly tailed off into a **draw**: 1 ♔e7 ♔f8 2 ♔e6 ♔b8 3 b7 ♔g8 4 ♔c6 ♔f8 5 ♔c8+ ♔xc8 6 bxc8 ♔+. Was this the best that White could have done?



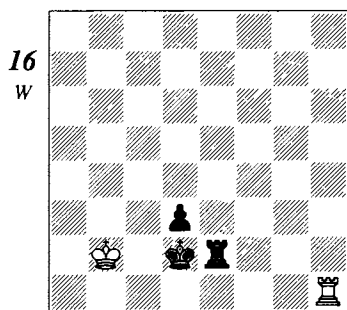
Black has been fighting a determined battle to win this drawn ending and has just pushed his pawn to g3 leaving White to decide whether there is a threat. White replied with 1 ♔f1 planning to answer 1...♖b1+ 2 ♚e2 ♗g1 with 3 ♖a4+ and 4 ♖xh4 drawing. Can you spot the flaw in his calculations?



This position arises from the note to Black's 29th move of the Guyard-Armas game at the end of the chapter. Since 1...♖f2 allows counterplay against the black king after 2 ♖b8 and 3 ♚f5, Black has to try a more creative approach. Do you have any ideas what this might be?



Black is hoping to draw by reaching the f-file with his king. White chose to prevent this with 1 ♖e5 ♚d6 and followed up with 2 ♚f5. Was this a good idea? What plan should Black have used in response?



This type of position is a theoretical draw that arises quite frequently in practice. White to play has several moves that hold the draw but I would say that one of these is simpler and safer than the rest. He also has a large number of losing options. The game that I found was from a Spanish open tournament and White chose 1 ♖h3. Under which category would you say that this move comes?

## Solutions

9) **Pokorna-Collins, Girls U10 Wch 1991**

1...h2?? was a terrible blunder that stalemated White's king and allowed her to **draw** immediately with 2 ♖e3+!. Black should have played ...g3 first before even thinking about committing herself to ...h2. In fact the quickest win would have been to gain a tempo with 1...♙f2 followed by ...g3 since this also gives Black the option of bringing a rook to the back rank and exchanging rooks, for example 2 ♖a1 g3 3 ♖a2+ (the flashy 3 ♖f1+ is well answered by 3...♙e2 followed by 4...♖d3 and 5...♖d1) 3...♙f3 4 ♖a1 h2 (Black could also arrange to bring a rook to the eighth rank but this is more forcing) 5 ♖a3 (otherwise Black just follows up with 5...♙g4 and 6...♙h3 as in the example earlier in the chapter) 5...g2+! (lifting the stalemate) 6 ♙xh2 ♖xa3 and wins.

10) **Singh-Ali, Dubai OL 1986**

White clearly wasn't familiar with the Lucena position since his first two moves were an appalling combination. If White is going to play ♙h7 then h6 is the worst possible square for his rook because it can neither defend the pawn nor check Black's king away after ...♙f7. In any case it is pointless trying to extricate the king from g8 until the black king is driven further away from the pawn. White should have been transferring his rook to the e-file in order to reach the Lucena position: 1 ♖a1 ♙e8 2 ♖e1+ ♙d7 3 ♖e4 and so on.

11) **Czeratski-Kammers, Germany 1993**

The position is completely drawn and 1...♙d8 is beyond reproach. However, things start going wrong immediately afterwards. The old cliché about rooks belonging behind passed pawns obviously misled Black into playing 2...♖h1?! when Philidor's method, 2...♖h6 3 d6 and only then 3...♖h1, would have drawn easily. After 3 ♙c6 some accuracy is required to make a draw and Black should bear in mind the principle of the sending his king to the short side to allow his rook a generous checking distance on the other side: 3...♖c1+ 4 ♙d6 ♙c8 would head immediately for the drawing position of Vogt-Pähtz earlier in the chapter. The manoeuvre 3...♖d1 4 ♙d6 (after 4 ♖g8+ ♙e7 Black's king may be on the unfavourable long side but as it hasn't actually been properly evicted White can't make progress) 4...♙c8 5 ♖g8+ ♙b7 6 ♖d8 (threatening 7 ♙e7) 6...♖h1 is also an efficient way to draw. The game continuation 3...♖a1?? led to immediate disaster although I would have tried to fight on in the final position with rook v queen (see Chapter 6). Probably Black was demoralized by what had just happened to his position.

12) **Szalanczy-Reeh, Dortmund 1987**

Yes, this was the best that White could have done. The position is completely drawn since despite having tied his opponent's rook down to the back rank White has an unfavourable knight's pawn. I explained

in the notes to the game Wagneur-Chassagne that this only leaves White one front from which to evict his opponent's king and Black has this covered with his rook. In order to win this type of position the superior side needs the option of using his rook to attack on both sides of the pawn and one file on the left is not enough to do this. There isn't even a way to make things difficult for the defender.

13) **Shirov-Karpov**, *Monaco rapidplay 1996*

In playing 1 ♖f1?? White had missed the decisive breakthrough 1...♙b1+ 2 ♖e2 h3!. This advance wouldn't be a problem were Black's rook not on the eighth rank but, because 3 gxf3 now loses to 3...g2 followed by promotion next move, all White could come up with was a series of spite checks:

3 ♖a4+ ♖f5

I don't think that there was anything wrong with approaching the rook immediately with 3...♖d5 but when I'm playing through a Karpov game I can only ever predict about 10% of his moves.

4 ♖a5+ ♖f6 5 ♖a6+ ♖e7 6 ♖a7+ ♖d6 7 ♖a6+ ♖c7 0-1

White did have to be very careful in the starting position: 1 ♖a8 would have activated the rook but also led to catastrophe after 1...♙b2+ 2 ♖f1 ♙b1+ 3 ♖e2 h3 whilst 1 ♖d2? ♙b1! is just as bad now that White no longer has a check on the fourth rank. I think that 1 ♖a1 followed, if necessary, by 2 ♖f1 was the safest way to hold the draw since very little

can happen to White with his back rank covered.

14) **Marin-Hamdouchi**, *Sitges 1994*

1 ♖e5 ♖d6 2 ♖f5 was an excellent manoeuvre. Black's king had to be cut off as soon as possible and advancing his own king is the only way for White to improve his position. 1 ♙h7 ♖d6 2 ♖f5 was also possible in order to cut the black king off along a rank but White's actual choice is more thematic. After 1 ♖e5 ♖d6 White's other tries are unconvincing: 2 f5 allows 2...♖e3+ drawing, whilst 2 ♖e8 ♖d7 doesn't help. Although Black is now lost he sensibly brought his rook round in front of the passed pawn and managed to put up some resistance:

2...♖g8

Threatening to draw with 3...♙f8+ 4 ♖g5 ♖g8+ 5 ♖h6 ♙f8.

3 ♖e6+ ♖d5

3...♖d7 4 ♖e5 leaves White with everything under control.

4 ♖a6!

Cutting the black king off along a rank, the same idea that cropped up in Lautier-Salov earlier in the chapter. Now the winning process is fairly straightforward and involves gradually shepherding the pawn home whilst keeping the black king cut off along the sixth rank.

4...♖e8

4...♙f8+ 5 ♖g5 ♖g8+ transposes.

5 ♖g5 ♖g8+ 6 ♖g6 ♖e8 7 f5 ♖a8 (alternatively 7...♖e5 8 ♖g7! places Black in zugzwang) 8 ♙b6 ♖g8+ 9 ♖f6 ♖g1 10 ♖f7 ♖e5 11 f6 ♖a1 12 ♖f8 1-0

**15) Based on analysis by Chekover**

The only way for Black to win is with the amazing 1...f3!! 2 ♖xf3 ♜f2!!. The point is that sacrificing the extra pawn opens the f-file and prevents White from generating any counterplay against the black king. He clearly cannot exchange rooks nor can he protect the g-pawn. One sample line is:

3 ♜f4+ ♔g5 4 ♜f3 ♜xg2

Even 4...♔g4 is possible if Black wants to be flashy.

5 ♜f8 ♜e2+! 6 ♔d3 ♜e7

Black will soon reach the Lucena position.

**16) A. Hoffman-Ro. Hernandez, Alicante 1989**

White can draw by moving his rook to almost any square on the h-file but 1 ♖b3! is the safest draw as White's rook is most effectively placed on h1 (for maximum checking distance and to prevent Black's king reaching the eighth rank). On the other hand b2 and b3 are equally

effective defensive squares for the king. Sadly for White, h3 is the one plausible square on the h-file that actually loses.

The game concluded:

1 ♜h3?? ♔d1+ 2 ♔c3 d2 3 ♜h1+

The move that White needed to work was 3 ♔d3 but because of the unfortunate placement of his rook this loses simply to 3...♔c1. If his rook had been further up the h-file then it could have swung over and given a check on the c-file. Now Black manages to consolidate the position of his pawn on the seventh rank and force a simple win:

3...♜e1 4 ♜h2 ♜e3+ 5 ♔b2 ♜e6 6 ♜h1+ ♔e2 7 ♜h2+ ♔d3 0-1

Ironically the diagram position had already occurred two moves earlier and White had also played ♜h3?? but Black had replied with the feeble ...♜f2??. It could be argued that he didn't deserve another chance after that. To make the whole affair more heinous I should point out that White was an international master and Black a grandmaster.

# 3 Rook and pawn endings (pawns on both sides of the board)

The preceding chapter revolved around the exploitation of material advantages. In this chapter I want to shift the focus to those rook endings which are more sensitive to positional factors, namely positions with pawns on both sides of the board. Despite the drawish tendencies of rook endings there are some positional advantages which can prove decisive and these are covered first. Then the chapter concludes with some examples where one side has an extra passed pawn on the queenside. Despite being very common in practice these positions aren't very well understood.

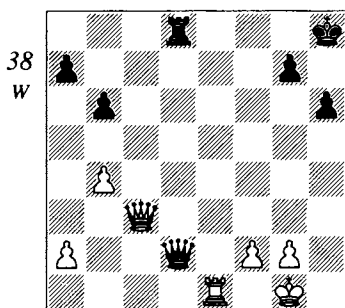
## Positional advantage

### Active v passive rook

When you first swap off into a rook and pawn ending with pawns on both sides of the board your priority should be to activate your rook – it may take five or six moves to activate a king but a rook can be established on an active square within a move or two and effectively decide an ending. The beauty of having an active rook is that you can attack your opponent's pawns, and sometimes tie

down both his king and rook to their defence. Then you can activate your king and wreak havoc: active v passive rook situations often turn into active rook + active king v passive rook + passive king positions. Make no mistake about it: in spite of the drawish tendency of rook and pawn endings an active v passive rook situation is often a decisive advantage. Usually the best location for a rook is on the seventh rank – not only are an opponent's pawns usually there but also his king may be cut off on the back rank. However, if he moves his pawns then the sixth or fifth rank may become the best location for your rook in order to keep his rook tied down. The defender must avoid complete passivity, even if it means giving up a pawn to do this. The next example shows the consequences of excessive materialism:

(38) Although the position looks drawish, Black's last move (...♚d7-d2) gives White some problems. 1 ♖e8+ ♘h7 doesn't help and otherwise it's hard finding a continuation that doesn't lose a pawn. Before going on to look at the game it is worth seeing whether White had any better moves than the obvious capture. Given that White is now trying to

**Grabics (2110) – Rajcsanyi (2100)***Hungarian wom Ch 1991*

Draw even if White plays 1  
 ♖xd2?! but only if she then  
 activates her rook.

draw, reaching a rook and pawn ending, with its known drawish tendencies, isn't a bad idea, but it would be nicer to reach it on White's terms. A rook on the seventh rank is much more dangerous if it forces the defender to defend pawns from behind (i.e. White's first rank). However, defending them from the front or the side is much more effective – after 1 ♖e3! ♜xc3 2 ♜xc3 ♞d2 3 ♞a3! White has no problems. Black could reply 1... ♜xa2 but after 2 ♞e7 ♜g8 3 b5, White's active rook and pressure against a7 and g7 provide full compensation for the pawn.

1 ♜xd2?! ♞xd2 2 a3 ♞d3!

Rajcsanyi is most famous in the chess world for writing letters to Bobby Fischer a few years ago that helped to bring him out of retirement. But she also knows her rook and pawn endings: this is a perfect example of the sixth rank being more effective than the seventh. After 2... ♞a2 3 ♞e3 I would say that the

position is equal – obviously Black's rook is well-placed but the white rook is quite happy defending the a3-pawn and could even switch to f3 or g3 to stop Black's king emerging.

3 ♞a1?

If Black's last move was good then this reply combines the bad and the ugly. White would love to play 3 ♞e3 but if you recall A.Sokolov-Korchnoi in Chapter 1 you might realize the problem with this. After 3... ♞xe3 4 fxe3 Black will centralize her king and then generate a passed pawn on the h-file – the dreaded 'outside passed pawn'. Instead, White should be able to draw by sacrificing a pawn and activating her rook. The immediate 3 ♞e7 ♞xa3 4 b5 is one reasonable idea since Black cannot take the b5-pawn without losing her a7-pawn. However, Black could try moving her g-pawn out of the firing line of White's rook and running her king over to the queenside to cover the a7-pawn. Then White's b5-pawn would start to look very vulnerable – were it to fall then (as we saw in Chapter 2) the two connected passed pawns will be a formidable force even if White has managed to generate some counterplay on the other wing. I think that 3 a4 ♞d4 4 a5! ♞xb4 5 axb6 is the best continuation. Whichever way Black recaptures, White will put her rook on the seventh and then shift it behind the passed pawn with excellent drawing chances. Returning to the game, now that Black has achieved a classic active v passive rook situation, she can follow a straightforward four-stage winning plan:



1) Consolidate the situation so that White's passive rook stays passive.

2) Activate her king.

3) Advance her pawns without freeing White's rook to strengthen her position further.

4) Prepare a decisive breakthrough with king and pawns on the kingside whilst White is still tied up on the queenside.

3...♖b3!

Black is very happy with the queenside structure and wants to try to make sure that nothing changes there. Otherwise White might have tried 4 b5 and 5 a4.

4 ♖a2?!

Wasting time. If White had immediately rushed her king over to c2 then Black would have been forced to play ...a5 (intending ...a4) to maintain her rook at b3. White could then have gained more breathing space by playing bxa5 and a4. Now Black's king makes it into the centre in time to defend the rook.

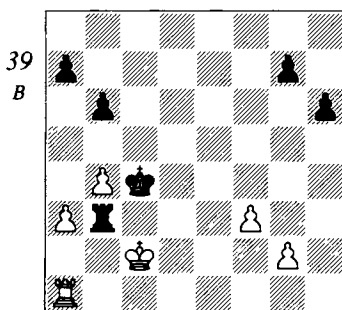
4...♔g8 5 ♕f1 ♕f7 6 ♖e2 ♖e6 7 f3?!

Why? This just creates more weaknesses.

7...♖e5 8 ♔d2 ♔d4 9 ♕c2 ♕c4 10 ♖a1 (39)

10...a5?!

Black wants to play ...a4 to support her rook and free her king to go marauding on the kingside. One disadvantage of the move is that it swaps off a pair of pawns and leaves Black with just a rook's pawn on the queenside, both factors which make a draw more likely. Furthermore, her position is so dominant that I would



### Grabics – Rajesanyi

Hungarian wom Ch 1991

Black's king and rook are so active compared to their white equivalents that her advantage is decisive.

have been reluctant to alter the status quo on the queenside – advancing Black's kingside pawns to g5 and h4 first would have strengthened her position. If you are wondering why Black's pawn moves strengthen her position whereas White's (at move 7) weakened hers then essentially there is one law for the weak and one for the strong. Black's more active pieces do give her a decisive superiority and all she needs is somewhere to infiltrate or break through. This is why White's 7 f3 was unfortunate: because it gave the black king the chance to penetrate at e3 or g3 and also made White's pawn structure vulnerable to a timely ...h3/...g4. The advance of Black's kingside pawns makes them all the more dangerous as passed pawns if the pawns at g2 and f3 were to drop off but also prepares a possible pawn breakthrough on the kingside.

11 bxa5 bxa5 12 ♖a2?!

White still refuses to recognize the importance of an active rook. The immediate 12 ♖h1 was one way of sacrificing a pawn for activity but 12 a4! first gives White more breathing space and exploits Black's inaccurate 10...a5?!

12...a4 13 ♖d2 ♖d4 14 ♖c2 ♖e3  
15 ♖c1 ♖f4 16 ♜e2!

White finally wakes up and sacrifices a pawn to bring the rook out of hibernation but she's about 15 moves too late. White's position is beyond repair because the black king is now rampant.

16...♖g3 17 ♖c2

Activating the rook with 17 ♜e6 or 17 ♜e7 would have been a better chance.

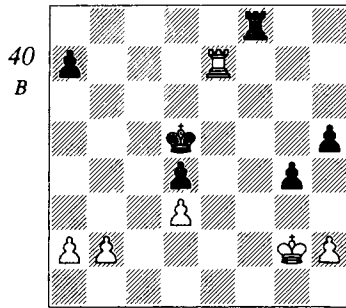
17...♜xa3 18 ♖b2 ♜b3+ 19 ♖a2  
g5 20 ♜d2 ♜e3 21 ♖b2 ♜e1 22 ♜d6  
♖xg2 23 ♜xh6 ♖xf3 24 ♜h3+ ♖f4  
25 ♖c2 g4 26 ♜h8 a3 27 ♖b3 ♜e3+  
28 ♖a2 ♖f3 0-1

Black would be winning easily even without the a-pawn.

### The strength of a passed pawn supported by a king

To win a rook and pawn ending usually involves generating a passed pawn and supporting it with your king. A rook on its own is not effective at shepherding home a passed pawn, principally because, unlike a king, it can't dislodge a blockading rook. As the next example shows, it can be worthwhile jettisoning other pawns just to acquire an advanced passed pawn supported by a king.

(40) It may seem incredible that White is lost here but I haven't found



Zapata (2500) – Diaz (2485)  
Havana 1988

Black to move wins due to the power of his centralized king. White cannot save the d3-pawn nor can he put up effective resistance to the subsequent advance of Black's d-pawn. The other black pawns that White picks up are irrelevant.

a defence for him. He has managed to transfer his rook to the seventh rank before Black, so his rook is certainly active. However, Black's king is well placed and he has the possibility of winning White's d3-pawn next move, which will give him a dangerous passed d-pawn. Moreover, White's a- and b-pawns are his only hope for counterplay but they are still a long way back. The h- and g-pawns, on the other hand, are far advanced and, as well as being potentially dangerous passed pawns, they also restrict the white king's freedom of movement.

1...♜f3!

1...♜a8 is the kind of move that would make a hibernating hedgehog look active.

2 ♜xa7?!

At the moment Black's king is perfectly centralized and ready to swing into e4 so White should be checking him away before taking on a7: 2 ♖d7+ ♔e5 3 ♜e7+ ♔f6 (an unfortunate necessity since 3...♔f4 allows 4 ♜e4+ and 3...♔f5 loses to 4 ♜f7+) 4 ♜xa7 ♜xd3. However, White is still lost: Black follows up with 5...h4 and 6...♞d2+ and runs his d-pawn. A passed pawn is twice as dangerous if your opponent's king is trapped on the back rank.

2...♞xd3 3 ♜a5+ ♔e4 4 ♜xh5

This looks optimistic but, now that Black's kingside pawns are no longer a threat and the h-pawn is defended, at least White is threatening to move his king over to the d-pawn.

4...♞f3!

Cutting the defender's king off from the passed pawn, an idea familiar from rook + pawn v rook positions. In fact, this position is arguably worse for White than any of those endings; since his queenside pawns are too slow ever to pose a threat, their only function is obstructing possible flank checks. If White seems to be floundering about in the next few moves then it's because there is very little he can try.

5 ♜h8 d3 6 ♞d8 ♔e3 7 ♜e8+ ♔d2 8 ♜e4 ♔c2 9 ♜xg4 ♜e3!?

Black could have tried the immediate 9...d2 but by now he's sure that the d-pawn will win material. If he could pick up the rook for it then the win will be very easy, but a queen v rook + pawns ending will still require some accurate technique.

10 ♔f2 ♜e2+ 11 ♔f1 ♜e1+!

Black could play 11...♜e5 (or even 11...d2 12 ♜c4+ ♔d1) and head for a Lucena position but it does take a few moves to win White's rook. In the meantime White will be generating counterplay with his h-pawn (supported by the king). Black's choice is much prettier (he will be a rook and two pawns down for a couple of moves), it's safer (he will have an extra queen) and most importantly, it wins.

12 ♔xe1

12 ♔f2 d2 13 ♞d4 d1♚ 14 ♜xd1 ♜xd1 is hopeless for White.

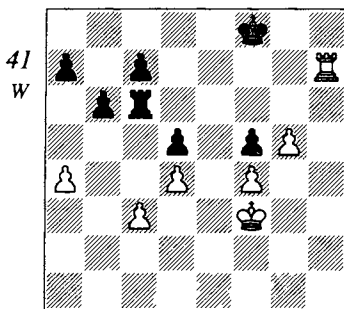
12...d2+ 13 ♔f2 d1♚

The triumph of the d-pawn! Clearly White's queenside pawns are doomed but I had to do some research to check that the ensuing ending of queen v rook + h-pawn is winning. In fact it is because Black's king is so active. Black duly won all three pawns and then brought home the full point in the queen v rook ending 34 moves later (see Chapter 6).

### The power of the rook on the seventh in conjunction with a king + pawn

I have emphasised the power of the active rook, especially on the seventh rank, and also the strength of a king supporting an advanced passed pawn. If you put them together then a truly fearsome force results. Although White can't simply promote his pawn in the next example because Black's king is in front of it, he generates mating threats instead. The whole set-up is similar to what

might have happened in the game Hjartarson-Korchnoi in Chapter 2 had Black's rook deserted the second rank. Here the presence of more material gives White the additional option of Hoovering up some of Black's vulnerable pawns.



### Capablanca – Tartakower

*New York 1924*

White to play wins because his king manages to break through to the sixth rank to support the rook and g-pawn.

(41) This is a famous example of this theme. Capablanca managed to establish a rook on the seventh rank a few moves ago but this in itself wouldn't have been such an important factor if Tartakower had not allowed an exchange of minor pieces at f5 and had to recapture with his g-pawn. This was unfortunate on general positional grounds because the white g-pawn is now protected and passed. Again this in itself wouldn't have been so terrible but the really serious news is that now White's king has a route into the black position. At least Tartakower's rook is an active piece and it is threatening

to wreak havoc amongst White's queenside. However, the combination of White's rook on the absolute seventh (i.e. no pawns in the way) along with king and pawn on the sixth is so potent that a couple of pawns one way or the other makes no difference.

**1 ♔g3! ♜xc3+ 2 ♔h4 ♜f3**

After 2...♜c1 White just manages to squeeze his king round in time: 3 ♔h5! (3 g6 ♜h1+ 4 ♔g5 ♜xh7 5 gxh7 ♔g7 would be a tragic end to White's ambitions) 3...♜h1+ 4 ♔g6 ♜xh7 5 ♔xh7 and the g-pawn promotes effortlessly.

**3 g6!**

Now that there is no need to worry about checks from the rear, White can set up his dream team (rook on the seventh and king and pawn on the sixth) without any loss of time.

**3...♜xf4+ 4 ♔g5 ♜e4**

The rook has to prepare to return without delay – if you don't believe me, then take a look at 4...♜xd4? 5 ♔f6 (threatening 6 ♜h8#) 5...♔g8 6 ♜d7 with unstoppable mate.

**5 ♔f6!**

The idea of leaving your opponent's pawns on the board as shelter for your king is a useful one and also crops up in positions where an ambitious monarch is trying to help promote a pawn.

**5...♔g8 6 ♜g7+**

This is the kind of move that shows White is in the driving seat and is especially useful if you're short of time. However, Capablanca was famous for his rapid play and probably genuinely thought that g8 was the best square for Black's king.



11...♔g8 12 ♖xa7

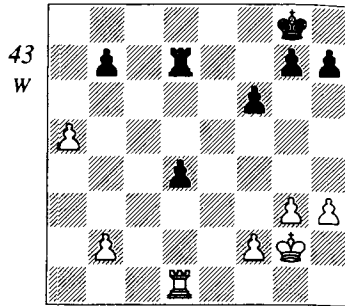
Although Black lets the other one go next move anyway, on principle this is the correct pawn to take first since it leaves Black with two isolated pawns. Black is completely lost.

12...♖g1 13 ♔xd5 ♖c1 14 ♔d6 ♖c2 15 d5 ♖c1 16 ♖c7 ♖a1 17 ♔c6 ♖xa4 18 d6 1-0

### The strength of the king as a blockader

I have already pointed out that the rook is generally a stronger piece than the king in rook and pawn endings. If your opponent has a passed pawn then do you really want your strongest piece sitting passively blockading it? If the pawn is dangerous enough to need close attention then ideally your king stays on sentry duty as a blockader whilst your rook goes out on active service. The beauty of this arrangement is that the passed pawn, far from being dangerous, can become a weakling when blockaded and may require constant protection from your opponent's rook. In the next example the pawn is so weak that White simply manoeuvres his rook round and captures it.

(43) 'Passed pawns must be pushed' is often a distinctly unhelpful saying – if the d4-pawn were at d5 then Black would be worse but not lost. In the diagram position, however, White has the simple plan of playing ♔g2-f3-e4 picking up the pawn. If Black prevents this with ...f5 then the white king can head for the blockading square at d3 and the



Jansa (2455) – Krasenkov (2555)  
Hamburg 1992

White wins because of the power of his king as a blockader of the d-pawn

rook can take control of the open c-file. White is fortunate that Black's passed pawn is in the centre and therefore blockading it is a positionally sound plan. If it were a wing pawn then it might still be correct to put the king in front of it but the position would not be as favourable as this one. White's play in this example isn't complicated – his real skill lay in aiming for the position in the first place. Black had a solid row of four connected pawns on the king-side but has just been forced to play ...♔d4 allowing White to capture it with a bishop. Far from being strong the resultant passed pawn is the cause of Black's undoing:

1 ♔f3

1 ♔d3 would be an unnecessary and bad precautionary move: White has nothing to fear from the pawn's advance.

1...♔d5

1...f5 might have been a better chance to hold on to the d-pawn: 2

♙e2 ♚f7 3 ♙d3 ♙e6 4 ♜c1! (now that the rook has been relieved of its duties on the d-file) 4...g5 (to discourage f4 from White and try to keep the e5-square for his king) 5 ♜c5! and although he hasn't won any material, White's domination of the board is total. All Black's pawns apart from his h-pawn are weak, his rook is tied to the defence of the d-pawn and his king is helpless. One winning plan is to play b4-b5 and a6 followed by putting the rook behind the resulting passed a-pawn. Black will have to block it with his rook and lose the d-pawn. He can't even offer an exchange of rooks because White's outside passed pawn will prove decisive in the king and pawn ending. All these problems stem from the dominant position of the white king and the disruption which it causes in the black position.

### 2 b4 d3

This doesn't really help Black but does at least set a cunning trap.

### 3 ♙e3

It is Black's dream to swap his sickly d-pawn for one of White's healthy queenside pawns, so 3 ♙e4? ♜b5 4 ♜b1 d2 would be a terrible mistake: Black would even be threatening 5...♜xb4+!. Advanced passed pawns should always be treated with respect even when it looks as though they are under control.

### 3...♜b5 4 ♜b1

Just for an instant Black can claim to have achieved an active v passive rook situation but his satisfaction is short-lived. Returning to d5 is the only way to save the pawn.

### 4...♜d5 5 ♙e4!

A little finesse that picks up the pawn without allowing any more counterplay against b4 – ironically White never does need to stick his king in front of the pawn.

### 5...♜d8 6 ♜d1 d2 7 ♙e3 ♜e8+ 8 ♙xd2

Black has really been hoping for tricks rather than playing 'sensible' moves. Now that White has dealt with them and picked up the passed pawn, the game is surprisingly easy to win: White's king is already well placed for supporting the queenside push whilst Black has no prospects for counterplay on the kingside.

### 8...♙f7 9 ♙c3 ♜c8+ 10 ♙b3 ♙e6 11 ♜d2 1-0

The resignation might look premature but White is going to create a passed queenside pawn with Black's king cut off on the e-file. And I suspect that Krasenkov was particularly despondent since he had declined a draw in the opening.

## White has an extra passed pawn on the queenside

These positions are very common in practice so I am going to devote a lot of space to them. I have pointed out that activating your rook is a priority in rook and pawn endings with pawns on both sides. Even if there is only one pawn on the queenside it is important for both sides to put their rooks on advantageous squares relative to the passed pawn.

For the superior side this is the fundamental order of preference for

rook positioning (with the most favourable case first):

1) behind the pawn (for example white rook at b2 with the pawn at b4);

2) to the side of the pawn;

3) in front of the pawn;

Why this order? In order to win these positions White needs to bring his king over to support the pawn's advance. If the black rook can reach the seventh rank then it may be able to keep an eye on the passed pawn from behind *and* attack White's kingside pawns. If White's rook has to cover the passed pawn from the front then it won't be able to defend the kingside pawns: his winning chances will not be so good if moving his king to the queenside means losing a kingside pawn or two on the way.

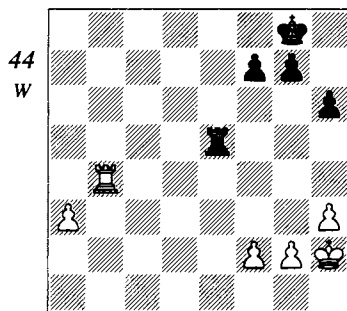
However, if White is quicker off the mark at moving his rook behind the pawn then Black's rook will have to blockade passively. This will make it hard for him to generate any counterplay and the white king should be able to move unobstructed to the queenside. Defending the pawn from the side is the middle option because it does nothing to restrict Black's rook but does often allow White to cover his passed pawn *and* his kingside pawns and thereby bring his king unhindered into the game.

In general, Black's order of preference for rook positioning is the same as White's, so both rooks may well be trying to reach the same square. There are exceptions, of course. If White has a passed pawn at a2, a rook at b2 and a weak pawn at

f3 then Black's rook will be more effective in front of the pawn at a3 (tying White's king down to f3) than behind the pawn at a1 (not a very active square and not attacking any pawns).

As the next example shows, the player to move when this type of rook and pawn ending is reached does have a valuable chance to swing the game in a favourable direction. He has the opportunity to decide where his rook is most effectively placed whereas his opponent can only react to this decision.

### White rook behind the passed pawn



**Suba (2580) – Xu Jun (2440)**

*Dubai OL 1986*

White to play wins because he can move his rook behind the passed pawn.

Black to play would secure good drawing chances with 1...♞e2 and 2...♞a2.

(44) Black has just captured a white e-pawn, so White has a free choice of squares for his rook:

**1 ♖b8+!**



In many of these rook and pawn endings, one of the players has faced a difficult decision over whether or not to throw in an intermediate check before continuing with his plan. White wants to put his rook behind the passed pawn and is hoping to persuade Black to blockade with his rook rather than with his king: diagram 43 showed how effective the king can be at dealing with passed pawns. Therefore, the further Black's king is from the a-file, the better: if White proceeds with the immediate 1 ♖b2, Black could continue 1...♔f8 2 a4 ♕e7 and if White tries 3 ♖a2 ♔d7 4 a5 then the black king reaches a8 in time. Then Black would be able to activate his rook and put up stiff resistance.

1...♔h7 2 ♖b2!

2 ♖b1 would be a careless slip allowing 2...♞e2 attacking the f-pawn and when White takes time out to defend it, 3...♞a2 would follow.

2...♞a5 3 ♖a2 ♞a4

Unless Black undertakes something positive, White is just going to run his king over, evict the black rook, advance his passed pawn and win the black rook for it. Black has two distinct defensive plans:

1) Running his king over to the queenside and switching places with the rook as a blockader.

2) The plan he adopts in the game – throwing his king and pawns forward to try to generate some kingside counterplay. If this becomes dangerous enough then he will be able to give up his rook for the a-pawn. However, one factor counting against him is that White has hardly

touched his kingside pawns so that it takes Black a lot of time just to come into contact with them.

I would have been more worried about the first plan and since Suba suggests 3...♔g6 as an improvement over 3...♞a4, I suspect he was as well. Even after 3...♔g6 White would still have good winning chances: if Black's king is heading over to the a-file then the kingside will be left vulnerable. White should try to infiltrate there with his king, and may well be able to give up his a-pawn in order to bring his rook round to the kingside. In the meantime Black's king can only sit on the a-file. However, if White had a c-pawn, for instance, then a draw would be more likely since the blockading black king could maintain a more central location.

4 ♔g3 g5 5 ♕f3 ♔g6 6 ♕e3 f5 7 ♔d3 g4 8 hxg4 fxg4

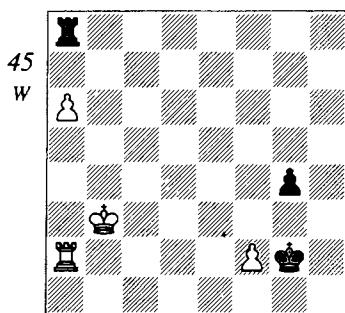
8...♞xg4 was an interesting try. Even though it leaves Black with two isolated pawns and will cost him time when he has to move back to a4 it does at least unbalance the situation on the kingside. If White were to reply 9 g3?! then 9...f4! 10 gxf4 ♞xf4 would suddenly give Black a dangerous passed pawn. However, as well as the solid 9 f3 he could try to punish Black for letting his rook stray from a4: 9 a4! ♞xg2 10 a5 ♕f6 11 a6 ♞g8 12 a7 ♞a8 13 f4. This position is a fine example of the power of a rook behind a passed pawn. Even though material is now level, White's rook will come to a6 next move and force the win of the f5-pawn. Black is effectively playing a

rook down – advancing the pawn from a3 to a7 in return for the g2-pawn was a profitable investment for White.

**9 ♖c3 h5 10 g3**

Achieving a passed pawn is Black's best hope of drawing, so for White to allow ...h4-h3 would be very silly.

**10...h4! 11 gxh4 ♖h5 12 ♖b3 ♜a8 13 a4 ♖xh4 14 a5 ♖h3 15 a6 ♖g2 (45)**



### Suba – Xu Jun

Dubai OL 1986

In spite of Black's active king and the reduction of material, White is winning because his rook is actively placed behind the passed pawn.

Suba would have been happy with the way the ending has gone. His rook defends both his remaining pawns and although the king looks active at g2, all he has to do to win is bring his own king up to b7 and win the black rook for the pawn. However, Black does have one remaining counter-chance: before White's king enters the action, he can give up his rook for both pawns and hope to

draw with king and pawn against rook – when this works is a matter for calculation but White does have to be wary of moving his king a long way away from the kingside. Since the squares c4 and b4 are an equal distance from b7, Suba chooses the one nearer the kingside.

**16 ♖c4! ♜f8**

This would be a plausible moment to try 16...♜xa6 17 ♜xa6 ♖xf2. The pawn is only three squares from queening and Black's king is preventing White's from approaching but White gains a tempo through one of those clever intermediate checks: 18 ♜f6+! ♖e2 (18...♖g2 19 ♖d3 g3 20 ♖e2 and White's king arrives in the nick of time) 19 ♜g6! ♖f3 20 ♖d3 g3 21 ♜f6+ ♖g2 22 ♖e2 and again the king arrives in time. This idea of checking and then putting the rook behind the pawn is a common device in rook v pawn positions.

**17 a7 ♜a8 18 ♖d3!!**

A real star move. It's clear that moving the king up to b7 would be playing into Black's hands: 18 ♖c5 ♜xa7! draws now that White's king is so far away from the g-pawn. But it does look pointless moving the king towards the kingside – what is Suba playing at?

**18...♖f3 19 ♖d4!**

White's position is so powerful that he not surprisingly has another winning plan. He can move his king towards the g-pawn and is quite happy to exchange it for his f-pawn because this would put an end to Black's chances of drawing with ...♜xa7. 19...♖g2 is answered by 20 ♖e4 ♖h3 21 ♜a3+ ♖g2 (21...♖h4

leaves Black's king cut off and allows the white monarch to head back towards b7) 22 ♔f4 ♕xf2 23 ♕xg4 and White wins comfortably because his king can take the direct route to b7 whereas Black's has to go via b2. Incidentally, after 19 ♕d4 Black is in zugzwang – were it White to move then he wouldn't have anything immediately decisive since ♕e5 is well answered by ...♞e8+.

19...♞d8+ 20 ♕c5 ♞h8

Alas! Black has had to lose a vital tempo – 20...♞a8 would have been met by 21 ♕b6 and with the king also defending the passed pawn it is too late for ...♞xa7. All White now has to do is secure himself against flank checks and remember not to play a8♚ until his king is at b7.

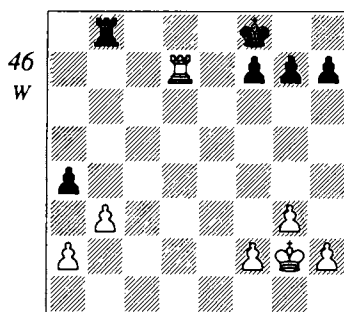
21 ♞b2 ♞c8+ 22 ♕b6 ♕g2 23 ♕b7 1-0

The pawn will promote next move.

### White rook to the side of the passed pawn

If White's rook is defending the pawn from the side then Black's rook may be able to come round the back to its ideal position. Then the key to success for White is to arrange his pieces so that his rook is not only defending the passed pawn but also the base of his pawn-chain on the other wing. Black might try to create counterplay by advancing his king and pawns but in principle there shouldn't be anything stopping the white king coming over to shepherd the pawn home. Problems arise where White can't cover all his loose pawns

with the rook – then he may have to sacrifice a pawn in order to launch his passed pawn. One advantage when White defends the pawn from the side (compared with the front) is that his rook can quickly slip behind it and send it shooting up the board. In this example White finds a particularly effective set-up and Black is unable to put up any serious resistance as White methodically improves the position of his king.



**Bukić (2500) – Janošević (2435)**

*Yugoslavia 1972*

White to play has reasonable winning chances because his rook can defend the queenside passed pawn from the side.

(46) Black has just played ...a5-a4, correctly trying to eliminate as many pawns as possible. Exchanging pawns is a good idea anyway if you are a pawn down but here it is particularly useful because Black's a-pawn is isolated and weak. White's duo of queenside pawns is a strong feature of his position and it is to Black's advantage to reduce it to one isolated (though passed) pawn. Had Black's last move instead been

something random, such as ...♔e8, then 1 ♖a7 would have given White a crushing position – he would have had an active rook on the seventh whilst Black would have had to put his rook on the passive square b5. One of Black's headaches in that kind of position is that he can never afford to lose the a5-pawn since he would have no chance against two connected passed pawns. After dissolving his a-pawn, however, his rook can become the active rook and White's, arguably, the passive one.

### 1 ♖d3

A rook on the seventh is not always a useful weapon. 1 bxa4 was also possible but after 1...♗b2, White will still end up with his rook to the side of his remaining passed pawn whereas Black's rook would already be active. White could have also tried 1 ♖d2 axb3 2 ♗b2 and 3 axb3 in order to place his rook behind the pawn but the order of preference of rook positioning that I quoted above is not fixed in stone. This wouldn't have been a bad idea, but with Black's king already on the f-file White obviously felt that it could come over and blockade the pawn too quickly.

### 1...axb3 2 axb3 ♖a8

Heading for b2 via a2.

### 3 ♔f3

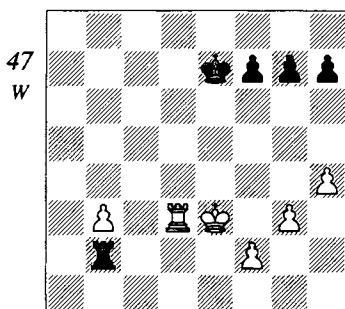
3 h4!?

### 3...♖a2 4 ♔e3 ♔e7?

A very sensible, natural move but since White has a smooth winning plan I think that Black's priority should have been to cause disruption. 4...g5!/? would be my suggestion to discourage White's next two

moves. Then one thematic plan for White would be to put his pawns at b5 and g4 and his rook at f5 (to cover f2 and b5 from a secure square) before running his king over. However, there are two problems with this: it doesn't take account of White's undefended h-pawn and also, and more seriously, Black would be playing ...♗b2 next move so White wouldn't have the time. In fact I'm not sure if White could have progressed after 4...g5 without sacrificing a pawn. He should have played h4 and f4 as soon as possible. which is why I suggested 3 h4!/?.

### 5 h4! ♗b2 (47)



### Bukić – Janošević

*Yugoslavia 1972*

White wins because he can attain his ideal formation when defending a passed queenside pawn with a rook from the side.

### 6 f4!

This isn't what you are normally supposed to do to pawn structures – it weakens the g4-square and usually would weaken the g3-pawn. Here it wins the game since White's two 'weak' points at b3 and g3 are now

solidly protected and his king is free to roam wherever it wants – in this case over to the queenside.

**6...♠g2**

In all these examples where White is trying to exploit a passed queenside pawn it helps if things are static on the kingside: Black can't easily exchange pawns, let alone generate any counterplay. This explains why Black is quickly reduced to floundering around with his rook.

**7 ♖f3 ♜b2 8 ♜e4 ♞e2+ 9 ♖d5**

Black is a grandmaster but his play around here does not make a positive impression – he is forcing the white king to where it wants to go. At least he could have tried to activate his own king and send it into g4.

**9...♖d7 10 ♞c3**

White cuts the king off – if Black manages to put his king in front of the pawn then White's task will be harder: he would probably have to turn his attention to the kingside.

**10...♞e1!?**

Another insipid move: at least 10...♞d2+ would force White to make a difficult decision – continue his plan with 11 ♖c5 and allow Black to follow with 11...♖c7 or try to infiltrate on the kingside with 11 ♖e5. Black's complete lack of counterplay means that they both look like good options but at least he wouldn't be giving up without a fight.

**11 b4**

Now that White's king is capable of defending the b-pawn it can finally advance to the fourth rank.

**11...h5 12 ♞a3 ♞d1+ 13 ♖c5**

Due to the wasted tempo at move 10, 13...♖c7 now allows 14 ♞a7+.

**13...♞c1+ 14 ♖b6 ♞c6+ 15 ♖b5 ♞c8!?**

Yet another unfortunate choice: after 15...♞c7 Black would keep open c8 for his king. 16 ♞a8 would prevent this but then Black could punish White for abandoning the third rank with 16...♞c3!?

**16 ♞d3+! ♖e6**

Black really doesn't want to go this way but moving to the c-file allows White to check and exchange rooks.

**17 ♖a6 1-0**

If we disregard the kingside pawns the position is almost identical to diagram 20 (with colours reversed). Black's checking distance is now so short that White will advance his king and passed pawn unhindered and reach the Lucena position. Having secured his b- and g-pawns White successfully manoeuvred his king from g2 to a6. Incidentally the winning technique is identical if White has rook + two widely separated pawns (for instance b- and g-) v rook: White would try to put the pawns on the same rank as his rook, after which his king is free to support either of the pawns.

### White rook in front of the passed pawn

Positions where the white rook is defending the pawn from the front are paradoxical. Unlike the positions with his rook behind or to the side of the pawn, it is easy to advance the pawn without having to bring the

king over. However, as the pawn advances, the less scope White's rook has and the more scope Black's has. In fact, advancing the pawn as far as the seventh rank is often a serious mistake that can blow any winning chances. How can this be? With White's rook on the eighth rank and his pawn on the seventh, 'all' he needs to do is move the rook out of the way without losing the pawn and it can queen next move. Doing this with a check would be the perfect solution but Black's king isn't usually amenable to this and hides out at g7 or h7. However, Black's rook is permanently tied to the same file as the passed pawn – if it leaves for even one move, to grab a pawn for example, then White's rook will be able to escape from its self-imposed exile and the pawn will promote. This means that White's king has considerable freedom to roam wherever it wants without worrying about losing kingside pawns. It can move up to the sixth rank to support the promotion of the pawn. Unfortunately for White it turns out that advancing his pawn to the seventh leaves his king with nowhere to hide whereas Black has all the checking distance he needs: a barrage of checks will be the inevitable result.

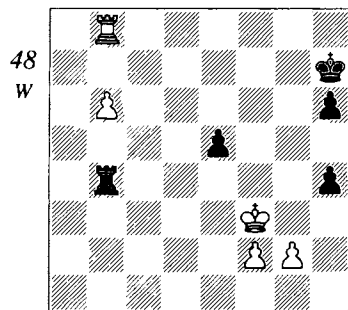
This set-up with a pawn on the seventh is very seductive for White because it restricts the black pieces so much but it only wins if there is some weakness in Black's structure. This means that either of the following must hold:

1) He must have a very weak pawn that White's marauding king

will be able to win. Moreover, after capturing it White needs to be able to generate a passed pawn to the left of the g-file. This is because this passed pawn has to be capable of enticing Black's king away from the safety zone of g7/h7. There is nothing more frustrating than advancing the pawn to the seventh, picking up a second pawn and then discovering that it's not possible to make any more progress because all you can create is a useless passed g- or h-pawn.

2) White can create a passed g- or h-pawn and the black king must be out of position and unable to return to the safety zone of g7/h7.

(48) This is an example where White wins because the conditions of '1' are met:



**Polugaevsky – Vasiukov**  
*Tbilisi 1967*

White wins because after advancing his pawn to the seventh he can force the win of the e5-pawn and leave himself with a passed f-pawn.

**1 b7!**

The observant reader will have noticed that White isn't actually any

material up here. This is because Polugaevsky has had to play h5 and force ...gxh5 before being able to advance his pawn to the seventh. Had he pushed on with b7 without having taken this precaution, Black could have played ...h5 himself and prevented White from ever creating a passed f-pawn after the inevitable fall of the e-pawn. The alternative plan of leaving the pawn at b6 and charging over to the queenside with his king is now very difficult to execute since it would involve sacrificing either the f- or g-pawn and would allow Black a dangerous passed pawn.

1...♔g7 2 ♕e3

If you're wondering why I've made all this fuss about creating a passed f- (rather than a g- or h-) pawn, imagine what would happen were Black to move his king to the f-file now. 2...♔f6 would be answered by 3 ♕f8+ and 4 b8♖ but what about 2...♔f7? White answers with a neat tactic that is fundamental to the whole ending: 3 ♖h8! ♗xb7 4 ♖h7+ picking up the rook. Whilst a g- or h-pawn won't disturb the black king, an f-pawn will decoy it onto one of these taboo squares.

2...e4

The usual rule for vulnerable pawns is that the further they advance, the weaker they become but this one is doomed anyway. If Black carries on with waiting tactics then White's king still infiltrates easily: 2...♔h7 3 ♔d3 ♔g7 4 ♔c3 ♖b1 (something has to give – the rook cannot keep control of the b-file and restrain White's king) 5 ♔c4 ♖b2 6

♔d5 ♖b5+ (Black is still holding on to the e-pawn but White can now switch to plan B) 7 ♔c6! freeing the rook now that b7 is defended.

3 ♔f4 ♔h7 4 ♕e5 ♔g7 5 ♔d5 ♖b2

The black rook is being asked to do three demanding jobs without back-up – staying on the b-file, defending the e-pawn and maintaining its checking distance (to prevent ♔c6) so it's not surprising that it takes early retirement from one of them. After 5...♔h7 6 ♔c5 ♖b2 7 ♔c6 ♖c2+ 8 ♔d5 the e-pawn falls anyway.

6 ♔xe4 ♖b4+

Black tries a few spite checks but he is defenceless against the advance of the f-pawn.

7 ♔d3 ♖b3+ 8 ♔c4 ♖b1 9 f4 ♖c1+ 10 ♔d3 ♖b1 11 f5 ♖b6 12 f6+ 1-0

It's more common for Black to have a solid kingside structure. Then White's most promising winning plan usually goes like this:

1) Advance the pawn to the sixth rank (in order to leave a potential flight square for the king on the seventh rank).

2) Move the king as near to the queenside as possible without losing material.

3) Arrange the kingside pawns so that Black creates the minimum amount of damage while White's king is heading for the queenside.

4) Decide on a moment when Black's king and rook are on their most unfavourable squares and then run with the king.

5) The passed pawn should cost Black his rook. Then the race will be on between the passed pawn(s) Black has established and White's king and rook, which are hurrying back to stop them.

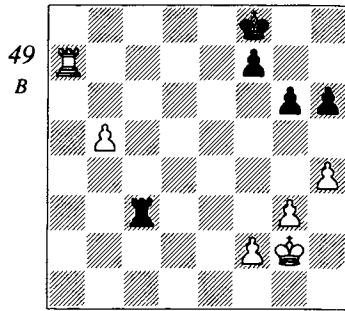
Whether this is sufficient to win depends very much on which file White's passed pawn is on. In practice he has scored very well with a knight's pawn whereas the rook's pawn (as always) is much less favourable because White's king has to travel one file further to support the pawn and one file further on the way back when he's trying to catch Black's passed pawn(s).

Black should be making it as hard as possible for White to bring his king over to the queenside and this usually means playing a waiting game. However, if he can generate counterplay on the kingside without seriously weakening his structure or over-exposing his king then he should do so. For instance, in the example below the idea of ...g5 was always in the air and could have been tried by Black at move 3:

(49) Endings with White's rook in front of the pawn crop up frequently. Often the price White pays for winning Black's last queenside pawn is that Black is able to choose the ideal square for his rook and force White's rook to occupy less favourable territory.

1...♖b3

With the king at g2 Black's rook belongs on the sixth rank and if White moves it to f1 hoping to



### Hollis – Florian

7th Corr OL

Draw because Black's rook is well posted behind the pawn and his kingside is very solid (i.e. advancing the pawn to b7, as in diagram 48, won't win). However, because White has a b-pawn rather than the less favourable a-pawn Black has to play very accurately.

emerge via e2 then Black will switch to the seventh. It is important to make it as difficult as possible for White to activate his king.

2 ♖b7

It isn't easy deciding whether the rook belongs at b7 or b8 but Adrian Hollis is one of the world's top correspondence players and I'm sure he would have put in hours of analysis over the next few moves deciding which is the more effective square. On the other hand, 2 ♖a5 is too passive to consider seriously.

2...♔g7 3 b6

Although the black rook is well placed on b2 the draw would actually be clearer if it were on e6. From there it would still attack the b6-pawn but would also prevent White's



only possible winning plan – bringing the king over to the queenside. If White were ever to bite the bullet and play b7 then Black would reply ...♖b6 with a clear draw because of the solidity of Black's kingside. However, defending from the side is often difficult to arrange in practice without freeing the white rook or king. Moreover, once it's taken a position to the side, the rook needs to be out of reach of White's kingside pawns, i.e. a rook at e6 is fine because Black can always answer f4 with ...f5 but at e4 (attacking a pawn at b4) it would always be vulnerable to being hit by f3.

**3...h5**

The f7/g6/h5 formation is usually the perfect defensive set-up with three kingside pawns. It is solid enough not to give White any points of attack but flexible enough should Black need to generate counterplay with ...g5. However, Black could have also considered the immediate 3...g5!? with the idea of generating counterplay or forcing the exchange of a pair of pawns.

**4 ♖f1 ♖b2 5 ♔e1 ♔f6 6 f3!?**

It looks odd to line up the f- and g-pawns on the same rank but it turns out that Black only has time to take one of them.

**6...♖b3**

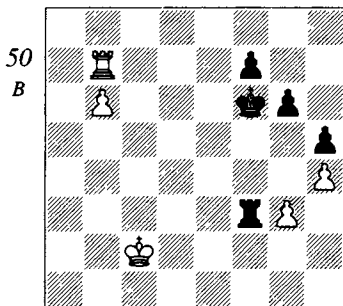
The black rook will be forced off the second rank anyway after ♔e1-d1-c1 so it attacks White's kingside pawns and forces matters.

**7 ♔d2**

7 ♔e2 is inconsistent and gives Black the chance to start some kingside action with 7...g5!?

**7...♖xf3 8 ♔c2! (50)**

This move makes life hardest for Black by preventing the return of his rook to b3 and also carries the incidental threat of 9 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 10 b7.



**Hollis – Florian**

*7th Corr OL*

Black to play draws but he does have to find the correct defensive plan.

**8...♖f5?**

Florian is following general principles in preparing to put his rook behind the passed pawn (at b5) but a more important factor is how his whole army co-operates. At some point Black will need to activate his king via f5 and g4 and it turns out that White can now prepare to answer ...♔g4 with a check on the fourth rank followed by the crushing ♖b4. Hollis had also worked out that 8...♖xg3 loses because of the difficulties Black has in bringing his rook back after 9 ♖c7!. Then Black could even win a third pawn before having to give his rook up but unfortunately for him the resulting ending of rook against three connected passed pawns is lost. There was also

a third (and correct) continuation which would have drawn although it might look unnatural to retreat the rook to a passive square in front of the pawn: 8...♖e3! 9 ♜c7 ♜e8 10 b7 ♜b8 intending to swap the f-pawn for White's g-pawn with ...♕f5-g4. Hollis thought that this also lost but the great Russian endgame specialist Averbakh showed that Black could draw with a timely ...g5. Even though this involves sacrificing a pawn, Black has to generate some counterplay and creating a passed h-pawn at the right moment is the only good way of doing this.

9 ♜c7 ♜b5 10 b7 ♕e6

This is an admission that things are going wrong but Black loses after 10...♕f5 11 ♕c3 ♕g4 12 ♜c4+ ♕xg3 13 ♜b4: he has to give up his rook, and his kingside pawns are too far back to trouble White.

11 ♕c3 f6 12 ♕c4 ♜b1 13 ♕c5 ♕f5 14 ♜d7! ♜c1+

14...♕g4?! 15 ♜d4+ and 16 ♜b4 promotes the pawn without allowing Black the chance to give up his rook for it.

15 ♕d6 ♜b1 16 ♕c7 ♜c1+

These checks are double-edged because driving White's king up the board does make promoting his

pawn easier. On the other hand it also makes it harder for him to return in time to hinder Black's kingside operations.

17 ♕d8 ♜b1 18 ♕c8 ♕g4 19 ♜d6 g5 20 ♜xf6 gxh4 21 gxh4 ♕xh4 22 ♜g6!

Slowing Black's king and pawn down to a snail's pace. This is the kind of finesse that is easier to find when you have days rather than minutes to ponder over a move.

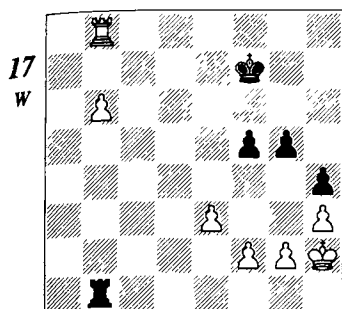
22...♕h3 23 ♕c7!

Threatening 24 ♜b6.

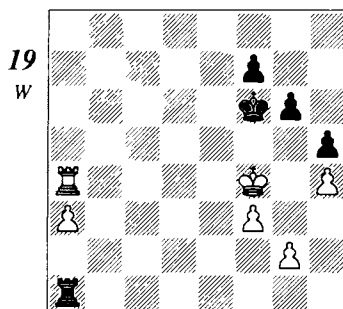
**Black now resigned** since after the forced sequence 23...♜xb7+ 24 ♕xb7 h4 25 ♕c6 ♕h2 26 ♕d5 h3 27 ♕e4 ♕h1 28 ♕f3 h2 White lifts the stalemate with 29 ♜a6 and delivers mate next move.

These were four of the most thematic examples that I could find of White having an extra outside passed pawn but I wouldn't necessarily claim that the 4-0 score in White's favour is typical. Each game showed how White should be playing these positions but I have indicated in each case (apart from Polugaevsky-Vasiukov, which was completely lost in any case) how the defender should have made life harder.

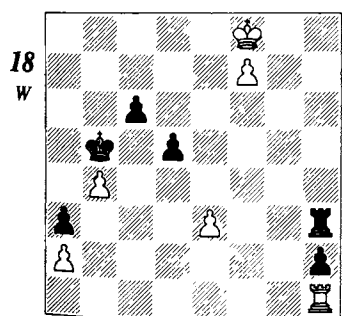
## Exercises



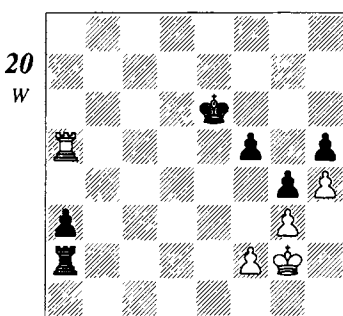
White has two extra pawns and pushed on with **1 b7**. What was his basic winning plan? Why did the reply **1...♖b2** cause him to change it?



Black has a tough defensive task ahead of him: clearly his opponent is planning to bring his king over to support the a-pawn so he attacked the weak points in the white kingside with **1...♗h1 2 g3 ♜f1**. Was this a good idea? How did White respond?

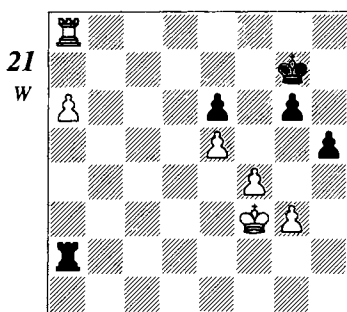


Both sides have menacing passed pawns on the seventh rank but in spite of his passive rook White has the upper hand because his king is supporting the f7-pawn. He does, however, face a problem familiar from the Lucena position – how to extricate his king without allowing a barrage of checks. What did White (to move) come up with?

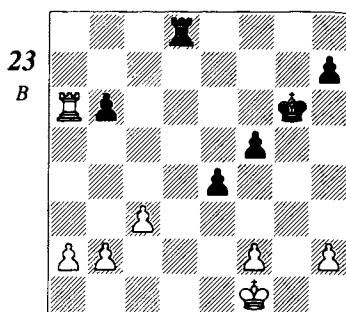


How would you assess this position? White decided to force Black's king into a decision: whether to hold on to the f5-pawn and allow more checks or to sacrifice it (and probably the h-pawn as well) in order to support the a-pawn. So he tried **1 ♖a6+ ♔d5 2 ♖a5+**. Was this a good idea?

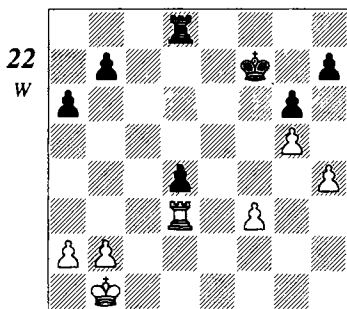
84 Rook and pawn endings (pawns on both sides of the board)



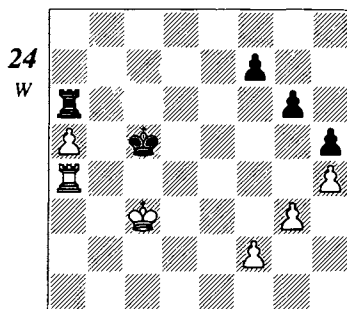
White played the committal 1 a7. Does this decision meet with your approval?



Black (to move) is a pawn down with a second pawn in jeopardy. How should he handle the situation?



Although the position is fairly equal, White (to play) managed to find a dangerous plan based on one of the principles that I explained earlier in the chapter. Black failed to find an adequate defence and lost very quickly. What do you think this plan was?



White managed to place his rook actively behind the passed pawn at the start of this ending but Black has activated his king and is sensibly preparing to substitute it for the rook as a blockader. Can you suggest a plan for White (to move)? 1 ♖f4 ♜xa5 2 ♜xf7 ♜a6 would be totally unthematic and 1 ♜c4+ ♔d5 doesn't help either.

## Solutions

### 17) Ortiz-Gueye, Dubai OL 1986

Assuming that Black starts off with 1...♔g7 and then simply waits, White can win by playing f3 and e4 and then advancing his passed e-pawn to decoy Black's king away from the safety of g7/h7. White will answer ...♔f6 with ♖f8+ and ...♔f7 with the same response as in the game. Instead 1...♜b2 shortened the game since White replied 2 ♖h8 1-0. This should be a familiar idea by now: 2...♜xb7 is met by 3 ♖h7+.

### 18) Illescas-Bareev, Linares 1992

White played 1 e4! sacrificing a pawn to block the e-file. Now 1...♞e3 2 exd5 cxd5 3 ♜xh2 ♔xb4 4 ♜f2 would leave Black struggling even to give up his rook for the f-pawn. So he decided to grab the pawn with 1...dxe4 but after 2 ♔e8 the game was effectively over since he had to give up his rook for insufficient compensation. The game concluded: 2...♜h8+ 3 f8♚ ♜xf8+ 4 ♔xf8 ♔xb4 5 ♔e7 ♔c5 6 ♜xh2 e3 7 ♔d7 ♔d5 8 ♜h5+ ♔d4 9 ♔xc6 ♔c3 10 ♔b5 1-0. This idea of hiding the white king behind a black pawn in order to assist a promotion cropped up in Capablanca-Tartakower earlier in the chapter.

### 19) Nikolaiczuk-Odendahl, Germany 1987

There wasn't anything much wrong with 1...♜h1 but replying to 2 g3 with 2...♞f1 was not a good idea. White's rook is badly placed in front

of the pawn and Black should keep it there by maintaining his rook at a1/a2. Going for counterplay on the kingside is a good idea in principle but it should be done with his pawns (...f6 and ...g5) rather than with the rook. White correctly seized his chance to swing his rook round to the side of the pawn after first throwing in a check:

3 ♜a6+ ♔g7 4 ♜b6 ♜a1 5 ♜b3

Bukić demonstrated the ideal setup in this type of position v Janošević earlier in the chapter and this is exactly what White now heads for. With pawns at f4, g3 and h4 the rook protects both weak points in his position (g3 and a3) and his king is free to head for the queenside. With a little more assistance from his opponent White executed the winning plan with admirable smoothness:

5...♔f6 6 ♔e4 ♜g1 7 f4 ♜a1 8 ♔d4 ♔f5 9 ♔c4 ♔e4 10 ♔b5 ♜c1 11 a4 ♔d5 12 a5 ♜c8 13 a6 ♜b8+ 14 ♔a4 ♜e8 15 ♔a5 ♔c4 16 ♜b7 ♜e3 17 ♜b4+ ♔c5 18 a7 ♜e8 19 ♜b8 1-0

### 20) Lutz-Bluhm, Germany 1988

White could have made a straightforward draw by just adopting waiting tactics with ♔g2-g1-g2. Black's rook is unfavourably placed in front of his pawn and the fact that two of his kingside pawns will drop off in as many moves if he tries to move his king over should have guaranteed the draw. For example 1 ♔g1 ♔d6 2 ♜xf5 ♔c6 3 ♜xh5 ♔b6 4 ♜h8 (intending 5 ♜a8) and White has the a-pawn under control whilst his own h-pawn is about to start rolling. Black could also try ...a2 at some

point but it would be a last resort because there are no weaknesses in his opponent's pawn position. However, **1 ♖a6+??** was an appalling idea that just gave Black extra tempi to improve the position of his king:

**1...♔d5 2 ♖a5+ ♔e4**

Clearly White hasn't helped himself by allowing the black king to advance from e6 to e4 but employing waiting tactics was still the correct approach. After **3 ♔g1** Black would have had to weigh up carefully the consequences of sacrificing kingside pawns with **3...♔d3**. Instead he threw away more tempi by checking and forcing the black king towards the queenside:

**3 ♖a4+?? ♔d3 4 ♖a5 ♔c3 5 ♖xf5 ♔c2 6 ♖xh5 a2**

Black has had to give up two pawns but his queenside position is now so strong that he quickly picks up the white rook for his a-pawn.

**7 ♖a5 ♔b2 8 ♖b5+ ♔c1 9 ♖a5 ♔b1 10 h5 a1♙ 11 ♖xa1+ ♔xa1 12 h6 ♔b2**

White's kingside pawns are too far back to cause any trouble.

**13 h7 ♔c8 14 f3 ♔c3 15 fxc4 ♔d4 16 g5 ♔e5 17 g4 ♖h8 0-1**

White was deservedly punished for his impatient checks.

#### 21) Karpov-Miles, Amsterdam 1985

With the white rook in front of a passed pawn, the decision about whether to advance it to the seventh rank needs to be taken carefully. It restricts Black's rook to the a-file and his king to g7/h7 but also rules out bringing his own king up to

support the pawn as a winning plan. For **1 a7!** to be a good move there must be a serious weakness in Black's pawn formation that can't be covered by the king from g7/h7. Here this is present at e6. In fact the game ended **1...♖a3+ 2 ♔e4 1-0**. One possible continuation would have been **2...♖a4+ 3 ♔d3 ♔h7 4 ♔c3 ♔g7 5 ♔b3 ♖a1 6 ♔b4 ♔h7 7 ♔b5 ♔g7 8 ♔c6 ♖a2 9 ♔d7 ♖a6 10 ♔e7 ♔h7 11 ♔f6** with zugzwang! Even winning a kingside pawn might not have been decisive had the resulting passed pawn been a g- or h-pawn, but as in exercise no. 17 an e-pawn will prove decisive.

#### 22) Benjamin-O'Donnell, *Mis-sissauga* 1990

White needs to blockade the d-pawn with his king to fight for the advantage. This will free his rook and in turn tie down Black's rook to the d-pawn. The immediate **1 ♔c2** was possible but White decided to find a good location for his rook first:

**1 ♖b3!**

The king would even be a good blockader at d1 so **1...d3 2 ♔c1 d2+ 3 ♔d1** isn't a worry for White.

**1...b5**

**1...♖d7 2 ♖b6!** would have been too passive. Now White could play **2 ♔c2** but after **2...♔e6 3 ♔d3 ♔d5** Black's king is as well placed as White's. Instead he tries a finesse to take away the d5-square from the black king and improve the effectiveness of his own rook.

**2 a4!? ♖d5?**

Underestimating the power of **♔b1-c2-d3**. Instead Black should

have hit out before White had time to organize an effective blockade: 2...bxa4! 3 ♖b7+ ♔g8 is fine for Black because he can attack the weak pawns at f3 and h4 either by ...♗f8 or by advancing the d-pawn and playing ...♗d4/...♗d3. Now the black king can no longer reach d5 and his b-pawn becomes a weakness.

**3 axb5 axb5**

3...♗xb5 4 ♗xb5 axb5 5 ♕c2 ♕e6 6 ♕d3 ♕d5 7 f4 ♕c5 8 f5! gxf5 9 h5 ♕d5 10 g6 hxg6 11 h6 wins.

**4 ♕c2 ♕e6 5 ♕d3 ♕f5 6 ♗a3 ♗d7 7 ♗a5**

White's king is securely blockading the d-pawn so his rook is free to go marauding.

**7...♕f4?!**

7...♗d5 allows 8 ♗a7 but would still have been a better chance.

**8 ♗xb5 ♕g3 9 ♗b4 ♕xh4 10 f4 1-0**

Black's d-pawn is dropping next move and since the b-pawn will be too fast in the king and pawn ending, the only alternative he has is a rook and pawn ending a clear passed pawn down.

**23) Tarrasch-Rubinstein,**  
*San Sebastian 1911*

The b-pawn really is in trouble since White can answer 1...♗d6 with the consolidating ♕e2 followed by a4-a5. However, Black also has his trumps: two menacing central pawns and an active king which he can utilize whilst White's rook is still off-side. The only missing factor is an active rook, so Black began with:

**1...♗d2! 2 ♗xb6+ ♕g5**

The comparable example earlier in the chapter was Capablanca-Tartakower where the combination of a rook on the absolute seventh rank, an active king and a dangerous passed pawn proved lethal. Here Black doesn't have a passed pawn and his rook isn't even controlling that many squares on the seventh rank but his activity does suffice to hold the balance.

**3 ♕e1 ♗c2 4 ♗b5**

White was so concerned about the plan of ...♕g5-g4-f3 in conjunction with ...f5-f4 that he acts to break up the pawn duo.

**4...♕g4 5 h3+! ♕xh3 6 ♗xf5 ♗xb2**

This kind of position arises quite frequently in rook and pawn endings: one side has a scrappy extra pawn but cannot exploit it and so the game tails off into a draw.

**7 ♗f4 ♗xa2 8 ♗xe4 h5 9 c4 ♕g2 10 ♗f4 ♗c2 11 ♗h4 ♕f3 12 ♕d1 ♗xf2 13 c5 ♕e3 14 ♗xh5 ♕d4 ½-½**

The players agreed a draw because White's c-pawn is not long for this world.

**24) Alekhine-Capablanca,**  
*Buenos Aires Wch (34) 1927*

The key to this position is realizing that Black is in a semi-zugzwang situation: moving his rook only makes things worse because White simply advances his pawn; advancing the kingside pawns is a temporary solution that will only weaken them in the long term. As far as the kings are concerned, White can infiltrate as soon as Black's king gives way.

**1 ♗a2!**

A fine waiting move to create the zugzwang.

1...♔b5

1...♔d5 2 ♔b4 risks allowing the a-pawn to storm through so Capablanca decides that the lesser evil is to transfer his king to the blockading square and allow White's king into the kingside.

2 ♔d4 ♖d6+ 3 ♔e5 ♖e6+ 4 ♔f4 ♔a6 5 ♔g5

The f7/g6/h5 structure isn't always favourable for the defender: if Capablanca had left his h-pawn at h6 earlier in the ending then the g5-square would have been covered and the winning process much harder.

5...♖e5+ 6 ♔h6 ♖f5

Black has made the best of his limited resources and his rook is both attacking and defending. However, his resistance could have been dramatically shortened had White used his rook to join in the assault on the kingside: 7 ♔g7 ♖f3 8 ♖d2! ♔xa5 9 ♖d5+ and whether the king goes up or down the board White checks again and swings the rook over to the f-file with devastating effect, e.g. 9...♔b4 10 ♖d4+ and 11 ♖f4. Instead after 7 ♖4 Black came up with 7...♖c5! hoping to counter-attack against g3 and the game dragged on for another 15 moves.



## 4 Minor-piece endings

The beauty of the various minor-piece endings is that they each have their own particular character and rules which cannot necessarily be worked out over the board. I have tried to pick out instructive examples of the four basic types of minor-piece endings which show players disobeying or obeying these rules so you can see how they have either been suitably punished or have reaped their just rewards.

### Opposite-coloured bishop endings

I believe that opposite-coloured bishop endings were invented to give hope to anyone who has made a mess of the opening and middlegame. One pawn down, two pawns down, facing positional bankruptcy – reaching an opposite-coloured bishop ending can still offer hope in the direst of situations because they do have such strong drawish tendencies. In general you win endings by the mundane procedure of promoting passed pawns. In opposite-coloured bishop endings if a player decides to control a square with his king and bishop then an opposing passed pawn, even if it is supported by the king, will never be able to cross it unscathed. To make matters worse, even if the pawn is not isolated but advancing as part of a duo, the defender may be

able to fix its partner on the same colour square and blockade both pawns.

### Guidance for the superior side

Although it isn't always possible, the superior side should generally be trying to keep other pieces on the board and avoid pure opposite-coloured bishop endings. Once in the ending, his primary aim should be to **start action on both sides of the board** and thus overload the defender's king and bishop. Isolated passed pawns on opposite wings can be very effective – the defender will often have to use one piece to keep an eye on each pawn: although the king is an immovable blockader, a lone black bishop is easily dislodged by a marauding white king. This can be such a powerful winning technique that it is often worthwhile investing a pawn or two to create a second passed pawn. Initially, however, it may only be possible for White to attack weak pawns on one wing and hope that this, in conjunction with a passed pawn on the other wing, will overstretch Black's defences. Unfortunately, in endings with opposite-coloured bishops, both players' pawns tend to gravitate to the same coloured squares as their own bishops, which makes them easier to protect and therefore harder for



kings whilst White takes the opportunity to force as many of Black's pawns as possible to move to light squares.

3 ♖f2 ♖f7 4 ♗e3 g6 5 ♗e5 a5 6 ♖d2

White would regret trying to grab a pawn with 6 ♗c7 a4 7 ♗xb6?? since the a-pawn is unstoppable after 7...a3.

6...b5 7 ♖c1 ♗d7

Making way for the king to emerge.

8 ♗c7 a4

Although it seems as though the pawns are going to be blockaded, a breakthrough with ...b4 will still be on the cards.

9 ♗d6 ♗e6 10 ♗f8 h5 11 h4

White was concerned about ...h5-h4-h3 fixing his h-pawn on the awkward (from the point of view of defending it) square h2.

11...♖f5 12 ♗h6 ♖e4

Now if he transfers his bishop to g5 White will have his perfect kingside defensive structure: both pawns are defended and Black has no pawn breaks. Unfortunately, this would leave his queenside vulnerable. If, on the other hand, White decided to put his bishop on e5/d6 to cover the queenside as well as the f-pawn, then Black would win another pawn by bringing the king round to g4. The need to defend the f-pawn from g5 or h6 is an ongoing problem for White in this ending and stems from the basic weakness of the kingside pawns. Clearly Ljubojević has realized one of the fundamental aims of the superior side in an opposite-coloured bishop ending: he is presenting White

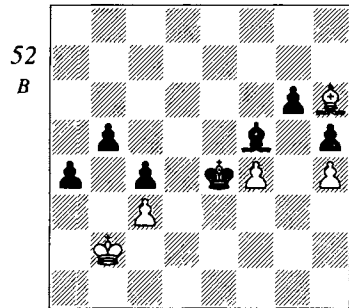
with problems on both sides of the board.

13 ♖c2 ♗f5

Black wants to have access to d3 for his king and White is trying to prevent him. One pleasing feature about this sort of ending is that Black can always drive the white king off a light square and c2 is no exception.

14 ♖b2 (52)

Black could have forced this move anyway with ...♗e3+. Now 14...♖d3 is well answered by 15 ♗f8 but Ljubojević spots that the time is right for his big breakthrough.



**Azmaiparashvili – Ljubojević**

*Leon 1994*

Black wins: because White is tied up on the kingside, Black can strike decisively on the queenside. However, accurate play is still required to bring in the full point.

14...b4!!

This really should have been broken White's resistance. The bishop at h6 is completely sidelined whilst Black's bishop is a monster. 15 cxb4 is met by 15...♖d3 16 ♗g7 c3+! 17

♠xc3 a3+ 18 ♚b3 ♠e6+ winning. Alternatively, 17 ♚c1 a3 is decisive and after any other king move 17...♚d2 will promote the c-pawn. However, Azmaiparashvili is a resourceful chap and came up with:

**15 ♠f8!**

Incredible – Black makes the breakthrough he has been dreaming about for many moves and White not only ignores it but also leaves a pawn *en prise*: the point is that maintaining the blockade is more important than mere material considerations. In any other type of ending ...b3 would be a good positional reply since it gives Black two connected and far-advanced passed pawns. Here White would reply to 15...b3 with 16 ♠h6 ♚d3 17 ♠f8! (not 17 ♠g7? a3+! 18 ♚xa3 ♚c2 and the b-pawn queens) with an unshakeable blockade. The key point is not how Black's queenside pawns would fare in a beauty contest but whether White's king can be dislodged from his blockading position in front of them. Ljubojević pointed out afterwards that he could have won with 15...a3+! 16 ♚a2 (16 ♚c1 a2 17 ♚b2 b3 18 ♠h6 ♚d3 {threatening 19...a1♚+ 20 ♚xa1 ♚c2}) 19 ♠f8 a1♚+ 20 ♚xa1 ♚xc3 and White is defenceless against 21...♚c2, 22...c3 and 23...b2+) 16...bxc3 17 ♠xa3 ♚xf4 cutting off White's king from the c-pawns. Azmaiparashvili would have been unable to deal with both the kingside threat (...g5 creating a decisive passed h-pawn) and the queenside threat (...♚f4-d2 followed by promoting the c-pawn), e.g. 18 ♠c1+ ♚f3 19 ♠g5 ♚e2 20 ♠f6 c2 21 ♚b2

♚d1 22 ♠g5 c3+ winning; White would draw if Black only had one c-pawn but can't cope with two. If White tries 18 ♠b4 to force ...c2 and enable his king to reach c1, then 18...g5! is decisive since it creates passed pawns on both sides of the board. However, Ljubojević's choice gives him the worst of both worlds – his two passed pawns are only one file apart so it is easy for White to maintain the blockade whilst their isolation makes them easy targets for White's king.

**15...bxc3+? 16 ♚xc3 ♠e6**

16...♚xf4 17 ♚xc4 (planning to establish an unbreakable blockade by putting the king on the a-file and moving the bishop round to g5) 17...g5 is convincingly answered by 18 ♠h6!

**17 ♠d6!**

17 ♠h6 a3 would have been asking for trouble but White has worked out that he can give up the f-pawn in return for a queenside pawn and reach a watertight blockade.

**17...♠f7 18 ♠e7**

Because Black can play ...♚e4-f5-g4 and force the win of a pawn, White decides to give one up immediately.

**18...♚xf4 19 ♚b4 ♚e4**

Opposite-coloured bishop endings really are a nightmare to win. Black is now three pawns up but is losing one of them back and has no winning chances. 19...♚e3 is no better: 20 ♚xa4 c3 21 ♚a3 ♚d2 22 ♠g5+ ♚c2 23 ♚b4 and although White's king has been evicted, Black can never push his pawn to c2 without allowing a blockade.

20 ♖xa4 c3 21 ♔b4 ♕d3 22 ♗f6  
 c2 23 ♗g5 ♗e6 24 ♗h6 ♗f7 25 ♗g5  
 ♗e6 26 ♗h6 ♗d5 27 ♗g5 ♗g8 28  
 ♗h6 ½-½

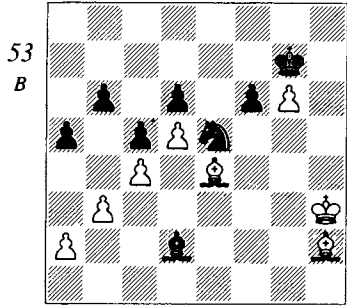
Although the white monarch has not managed to reach its ideal square at c1, the bishop is so well placed (defending h4, covering c1 and preventing an effective break with ...g5) that Black has no way of making progress. In order to win he has to achieve the impossible task of bringing his king round to d1 without allowing White's king back to b2.

Before you wonder how many clear extra pawns are necessary to win an opposite-coloured bishop ending if one of the world's top grandmasters can't manage it with two, I should point out that positional factors are often as important as material considerations.

### Positional advantage

The next example features material equality but the white king manages to infiltrate on the light squares whilst the black king is tied up with White's passed pawn. Black's pawns are on dark squares but his bishop is such an ineffectual piece that it can't keep White's queenside play under control.

(53) Farago is a tough Hungarian grandmaster who had probably been expecting to grind out his usual victory against the King's Indian Defence. However, the strength of his two bishops is fully matched by the power of his opponent's minor pieces and the weakness of the d6-pawn is



**Farago (2515) –  
 Zimmerman (2345)**  
*Zalakaros 1992*

Draw because White's only hope of winning is to swap off into the opposite-coloured bishop ending and infiltrate the queenside with his king via f5 and e6. However, Black should always be able to prevent this.

offset by the shaky g6-pawn. White's king would love to infiltrate into b5 via a3 and a4 but Black's bishop can easily prevent this. The pawn break b4 is infeasible, so White's only real winning chance is to capture on e5 and head for the opposite-coloured bishop ending. After all, he does have a strong passed pawn at g6 which greatly restricts the black king's freedom of movement. Following the second of the guidelines for the superior side given above, White will also need to generate some action on the queenside. He can't attack any of Black's pawns with his bishop, so his king needs to be able to infiltrate the queenside, harvest a pawn or two and then create a passed pawn on the queenside. At the moment, assuming Black

were to recapture on e5 with his f-pawn, he would be able to answer ♖g4 with ...♗f6. This would effectively keep the white king out. However, it was Black to play and he chose the appalling...

1...♗g5??

1...♗h6?? would have been just as disastrous but 1...♗c1, 1...♗e3 and 1...♗h6 were all perfectly adequate to hold the draw. Farago had just been manoeuvring around for the previous few moves so perhaps his opponent had been lulled into a false sense of security or was trying to prevent the non-existent threat ♗h4-h5. Whatever the reason, now he is lost.

2 ♗xe5! fxe5

After 2...dxe5 3 d6 Black has to give up a pawn immediately with 3...f5 just to stop the d-pawn. In the long run, White's king will come in and complete the annihilation.

3 ♖g4

The horrible truth must have dawned on Black around here: 3...♗f6 allows 4 g7! winning a piece. He has to resign himself to allowing in the unwelcome intruder and defending the pawns as best he can.

3...♗d8 4 ♗f5 ♗e7 5 ♗e6 ♗f8 6 ♗c2!

A class move – maybe it isn't strictly necessary but it cuts out Black's only tiny hope of counterplay and will therefore depress him even more. Had White played the immediate 6 ♖d7 ♗f6 7 ♗c6 then Black could have started to run his e-pawn after ...♗g5-f4.

6...♗g8

6...♗h6 loses the e-pawn after 7 ♗f7 ♗g7 8 ♗e7.

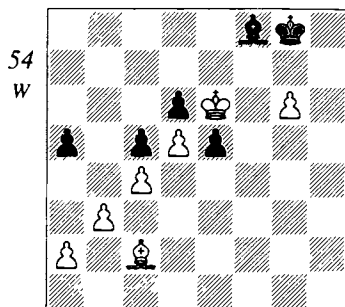
7 ♖d7 ♖g7 8 ♗c6 ♗e7

Now ...♗f6-g5-f4 is two tempi slower so Black sensibly decides to try to maintain his blockade – even though the b-pawn is dropping, he can cope with the threats to his a- and d-pawns by alternating from e7 to d8.

9 ♖xb6 ♗d8+ 10 ♗c6 ♗e7

White cannot win any more pawns by force so the winning plan will have to involve a pawn breakthrough. Black's bishop has least mobility with the white king on e6, so Farago marches his king back.

11 ♖d7 ♗f8 12 ♗e6 ♖g8 (54)



### Farago – Zimmerman

*Zalakaros 1992*

Black's pieces are so ineffectually placed that White can win with a sacrificial breakthrough on the queenside.

Now the immediate 13 b4 is simply answered by 13...axb4. If White goes for his big breakthrough with a3 and b4 then after 13 a3 ♖g7 14 b4 cxb4 15 axb4 axb4 16 c5 dxc5 17 d6 ♗xd6 18 ♗xd6 c4 White would risk losing if he tried to hold on to his pawn, so the game would peter out to

a draw after 19 ♖xe5 b3 20 ♙d1 ♜xg6. However, White's only problem in this line was running out of pawns so he hit upon a brilliant way to hang on to his a-pawn:

13 a4! ♜g7 14 b4!!

Now 14...axb4 allows the a-pawn an unopposed run to the eighth rank, so:

14...cxb4 15 c5 dxc5 16 d6

Farago has cleverly arranged for Black's king to be on g7 obstructing the bishop. Were it on g8 then Black could throw a major spanner in the works by playing ...♙f8-h6-g5, covering d8 in time.

16...♙xd6

Just for a moment Black was a whole pawn up but the power of passed pawns on opposite wings means that he has to give up his bishop immediately.

17 ♜xd6 e4

17...c4 looks more plausible but also loses after 18 ♖xe5 b3 19 ♙d1 ♜xg6 20 ♜d4 and Black will lose all three pawns in the next few moves.

18 ♙xe4 1-0

Perhaps Farago was slightly fortunate that Black slipped up with 1...♙g5?? but his demolition of Black's shaky queenside blockade in the opposite-coloured bishop ending was impressive.

## Same-coloured bishop endings

Same-coloured bishop endings represent a return to sanity in comparison to the previous section and generally 'normal' endings criteria apply:

1) Activation of the king is a priority.

2) An extra outside passed pawn is likely to be a decisive advantage since it should deflect the opposing king and allow your king to infiltrate decisively on the other wing.

3) With pawns on one wing, an extra pawn gives very few practical winning chances.

However, there is one idiosyncratic feature about these endings: it is vital to have your pawns on the right colour squares. There are only two possible colours in chess and since the right colour is the *opposite* colour to that of your own bishop, you would not have thought this a very difficult rule to follow, but players often seem to forget or underestimate it.

If you have, for example, a light-squared bishop and your opponent has cunningly managed to fix your pawns on light squares then you will suffer from three disadvantages, of which the third is usually the most significant:

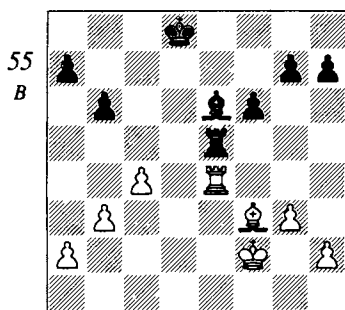
1) Your pawns are also on the same colour squares as your opponent's bishop and are therefore vulnerable to attack.

2) Your pawns are likely to be hindering the free movement of your own bishop thereby making it a '*bad bishop*'.

3) Neither your pawns nor your bishop will be able to hinder the infiltration of your opponent's king on the dark squares. It is possible that your king may be sufficiently active to prevent this happening but your

opponent can sometimes exploit the other two factors to dislodge it.

The next example shows one side willfully placing his pawns on the same colour squares as his bishop and being deservedly punished:



### Pfeiffer – Braun (2365)

*Germany 1989*

The position is completely equal.

(55) Both sides have pawn majorities which should cancel each other out. Although White has more pawns on light squares, this doesn't matter too much because they are still mobile. He does have the slight advantage that his king is already on the second rank and although this shouldn't be significant, it sows the seeds of later troubles for Black.

#### 1... ♖xe4

White's last move was ♗f4-e4 so perhaps Black exchanged as a knee-jerk response. However, this does give White's king the opportunity to reach the important central square d4. Leaving White to capture on e5, on the other hand, would have left Black well placed in the battle for the central dark squares, for example

1... ♔e7 2 ♔e3 ♔d6 and 3 ♔d4 is well met by 3... ♕f5. The e-pawn is only weak if White can establish his king on e4, but since this is a light square it will be vulnerable to bishop checks there.

#### 2 ♕xe4 f5?!

I wasn't too keen on Black's last move but this is a definite first step on the road to ruin. Black wants to set his pawn majority in motion and seizes the opportunity to do so with tempo but he is moving a pawn onto a square that is the same colour as his bishop. This would not be serious if he were sure of being able to play ...g5 and ...f4 in safety but the active position of White's king is going to make this very difficult. As I have suggested, the main problem with this kind of move is not that the pawn is necessarily going to become weak or that the black bishop will become a bad piece but that it weakens the dark squares – in this case, e5. 2...h6 would have dealt with the threat to the h-pawn by shifting Black's last pawn from a light to a dark square and after 3 ♔e3 ♔e7 4 ♔d4 ♔d6 5 b4 ♕f7 (a waiting move) 6 c5+ bxc5+ 7 bxc5+ ♔c7 I don't see how White can ever make progress. Black's pawns and bishop form an impenetrable barrier to White's king on the dark and light squares respectively and as long as he refuses to exchange bishops his position is secure, e.g. 8 ♕d5 ♕e8 9 ♕e6 (planning 10 ♔d5) 9... ♕c6!.

#### 3 ♕d3 ♔e7 4 ♔e3 ♔f6 5 ♔d4 g5

Preparing to swap some pawns on the kingside and keeping the pawn on a dark square.

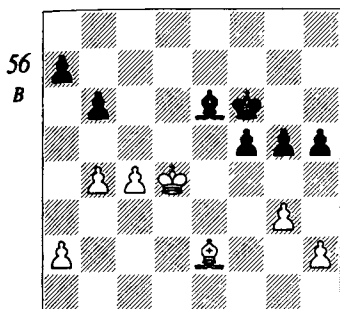


**6 b4 h5**

A sensible method of gaining counterplay if followed up correctly: ...h4 will be a good way to exchange some pawns and ensure that the h-pawn ends up on a dark square. 7 h4 (trying to fix the pawn on a light square) is well answered by 7...f4!.

**7 ♖e2! (56)**

Preparing 8 ♖f3 and eyeing up a potential weakness at h5.



**Pfeiffer – Braun**

*Germany 1989*

White stands better because his king is more active and his pawn majority more dangerous than Black's. Black is also in danger of having his pawns fixed on the same coloured squares as his bishop.

**7...g4?**

A vile move that leaves Black's kingside pawns fixed on light squares and makes a breakthrough there very difficult. After 7...h4! 8 gxf4 (8 a3 hxg3 9 hxg3 f4 10 gxf4 gxf4 would allow all White's kingside pawns to be exchanged so Black could even afford to give up his f-pawn and run his king over to c7. I

pointed out in the guidelines above that an extra pawn is unlikely to win with all the remaining pawns on one wing) 8...gxh4 White still has to demonstrate that his c-pawn will be more effective than Black's passed pawn.

**8 a4**

Although White's position is still very good, I would not have played this move. The same criteria apply to White as Black and I think he should also be keeping his pawns off light squares. If White wants to advance his c-pawn without losing the a-pawn then, at the risk of nit-picking, I would have preferred 8 a3.

**8...♔g5?**

Making matters even worse. Black is positionally lost, and so he should have tried to confuse matters and make the most of his trumps with a pawn sacrifice: 8...f4! 9 gxf4 h4. Although he no longer has one more of them, at least his kingside pawns are starting to look menacing. Now White's king reaches a dominating central square.

**9 ♖e5 ♖c8**

Black could have exploited White's eighth move and gained a tempo with 9...♖d7. However, positionally he stands so badly that a tempo one way or the other is unlikely to affect the outcome.

**10 ♖d3**

There was no particular reason to refrain from playing 10 c5 other than White's desire to improve his position further – the f5-pawn is now Black's weakest point and by attacking it Herr Pfeiffer makes ...h4 less appetizing.

10...a5 11 bxa5 bxa5 12 c5 ♖d7

Black hasn't timed this move very well – at moves 9 or 10 the a-pawn would not have been so easy to cover.

13 ♖b5 ♖c8 14 c6 h4 15 c7

White's position is crushing – the basic winning plan is to evict the blockader with ♖b5-c4-e6.

15...hxg3 16 hxg3 ♖g6 17 ♖d3 ♖g5 18 ♖c4 f4 19 gxf4+ ♖g6 20 ♖e6

There are a number of ways to win. White's choice allows Black to promote but that is going to be his sole achievement in this ending.

20...g3 21 ♖xc8 g2 22 ♖f5+ ♖g7 23 c8♚ g1♚ 24 ♚d7+ ♖f8 25 ♚d8+ ♖g7 26 ♚g5+

I'm sure White would have been expecting resignation here, and so Black's little stalemate trick must have shocked him for a moment. Fortunately he has mate in two.

26...♖h8! 27 ♚h6+ 1-0

27...♖g8 28 ♖e6 is mate.

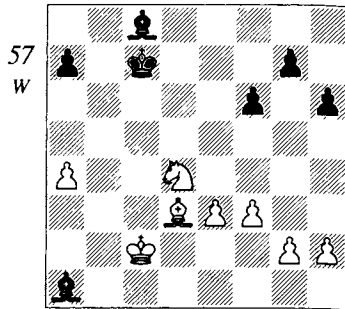
(57) The idea of putting pawns on opposite-coloured squares to the bishop is so important that it can often offset a pawn deficit. In the next example, White has an extra passed pawn but Black's pawns are already correctly placed and he manages to carry out two other vital defensive tasks:

1) Keeping out the opposing king.

2) Blockading the passed pawn with his own king.

1 f4

Threatening to win a whole piece with 2 ♜b3. However, there was an argument for not allowing ...♖xd4:



**Novikov (2550) – Serper (2490)**  
*USSR Ch 1991*

White's extra pawn is difficult to exploit and his winning chances disappear completely once Black takes on d4.

even though Black's bishops are ineffective in this kind of position with pawns on both sides of the board, it is so straightforward for him to make a draw after 1...♖xd4 that a more ambitious player would have tried 1 ♜b3.

1...♖xd4! 2 exd4 a5!

Preventing White's king from coming in via b4 and also fixing White's a-pawn on a light square.

3 ♖c3 ♖d6

Blockading the passed pawn. I made the point in Chapter 3 that a central passed pawn is often not a potent weapon. This is particularly true when a king blockades it because even if the pawn were not on the board, the king might well want to be on the same square, i.e. the pawn is not causing any real inconvenience. This is also the case here – were Black's king blockading a passed pawn on the a-file then White's chances of infiltrating with his king

would be much greater. As it is, they are non-existent. If White's king did, by some miracle, manage to penetrate in this kind of position then, in contrast to opposite-coloured bishop endings, Black's chances of holding the position would be minimal because his pawns would simply drop off. White could now try 4 ♖c4 hopping to sneak in with 5 ♖b5 after a sloppy response from Black. However, both 4...♙a6+ and 4...♙d7 are more than adequate responses.

4 ♖c4 ♙f5 5 ♙b3 ♙e4 6 g3

Again there are two simple replies to 6 ♖c4: 6...♙d5+ and 6...♙c6.

6...♙f5 7 ♖d2 ♙e4 8 ♖e3 ♙c6 9 h4 ♙b7

Novikov could see no sensible winning attempts so a **draw** was agreed.

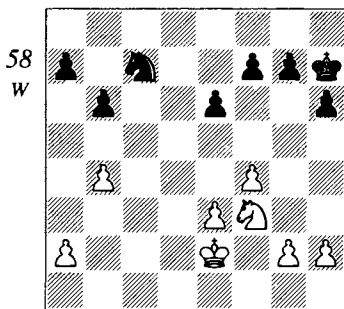
## Knight endings

It has been said that knight endings have a lot of features in common with king and pawn endings. The logic is that the knight has similar abilities to the king: neither piece can move very fast although when it comes to reaching or controlling a specific square they will both eventually arrive there. Because of this it is very difficult to set up a watertight blockade against a knight and, in comparison with bishop endings, the defender often has a harder task saving inferior positions. If the pawns are all on one side of the board the knight is a particularly effective piece and the stronger side's advantage is much greater than in the corresponding position with bishops.

The knight's big weakness is its relative impotence against passed pawns, especially rook's pawns. For instance, with White to move, a white pawn on a5 can promote by force against a black knight on b7.

Another key factor with knights is what 'circuit' they end up on: imagine that c5 and g5 are desirable squares for a white knight. If the knight starts out at e4 then it is clearly on the right circuit. However, shift it to e3 and it is on the same circuit as c4, d5, f5 and g4, all of which are probably useless, and the knight is on the wrong circuit and may have to manoeuvre for many moves to reach c5 or g5. The next example shows many of these features: White's initial advantage is not that great but his knight is on a good circuit (f3/e5/c6) and his king is better placed. The knight forces a slight weakening in Black's queenside pawns and it only takes one inaccuracy from Black for White's king to infiltrate the queenside and win Black's a-pawn. Although Black manages to maintain material equality, as so often in knight endings, a passed rook's pawn brings about his eventual defeat.

(58) White has maintained a slight initiative throughout the game due to his major-piece pressure on the c-file. Black has just managed to swap off White's rook but not before it reached c8 and forced Black's king to an even less favourable square. In the meantime White has managed to centralize his king whilst his knight is also ready to leap into e5 and c6 in order to attack Black's

**Yermolinsky (2605) – Lein (2465)***Las Vegas 1993*

White to play has some initiative in spite of the nearly symmetrical pawn structure because of his more active king, but the game should be a draw.

queenside pawns. Still, Black has no obvious weaknesses and is a tough ex-Russian grandmaster so a hard struggle is in prospect.

**1 ♖d3 ♜g8 2 ♘e5 ♜f8 3 ♖c4 f6**

Unfortunately for Black, 3...♗e7 loses a pawn to 4 ♘c6+ whilst 3...a6 meets a similar fate after 4 ♘d7+ so he has to waste a tempo driving the knight away.

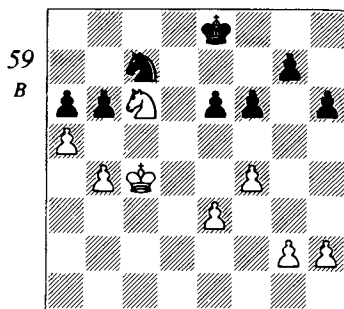
**4 ♘c6 a6**

Black has managed to set up a barrier to the white king and if it stays intact whilst he manages to play ...♜f8-e8-d7 then White's advantage will disappear. Yermolinsky decides that the only way to open up a quick route into Black's position is via c5 so he prepares to divert the black b-pawn with a4-a5.

**5 a4 ♜e8 6 a5 (59)**

**6...bxa5?**

A major concession because now White's king reaches c5 in time to

**Yermolinsky – Lein***Las Vegas 1993*

Black can equalize as long as he prevents the white king from infiltrating via c5.

defend his knight. 6...♗d7 was the move that Lein would have wanted to play but he was probably scared off by the prospect of White's king reaching the fifth rank in the king and pawn ending. In fact 6...♗d7 7 axb6 (7 ♘b8+ ♖c8 8 axb6 comes to the same thing, while after 7 ♘d4 bxa5 8 bxa5 ♗d6 the worst is over for Black) 7...♖xc6 8 bxc7 ♖xc7 9 ♖c5 f5! makes a surprising draw. Although White's king is far advanced, even with the opposition the weak b-pawn will hinder his attempts to infiltrate. Once Black has solidified the kingside with ...g6 he will be able to wait calmly with ...♖c7-b7-c7 and answer the bold ♗d6 by running for the b-pawn. White also has to be careful if he tries a preliminary advance on the kingside (h3 and g4) because this could allow Black to generate a fearsome outside passed h-pawn with ...fxg4 followed by ...h5. I would like to be able to draw some profound lesson from Black's

failure to swap off into the king and pawn ending but you may recall a contrasting example from Chapter 1 where Black's decision to simplify from a knight ending into a pawn ending was a bad one. One piece of advice that I often give pupils is to analyse with particular care the move that they would choose to play on general grounds. This is just common sense but Black obviously didn't go into sufficient depth when analysing 6...♔d7.

**7 bxa5 ♕d7 8 ♕c5 ♖d5**

Lein was probably relying on this defence to solve his problems – he wins one of White's kingside pawns but loses the vital a-pawn.

**9 ♖b8+ ♕c8 10 ♖xa6 ♖xe3 11 g3**

A consolidatory move that puts the onus on Black to find a good plan. White has two major advantages – his active king and his outside passed rook's pawn. Conventional wisdom is that White should be using his a-pawn to decoy the black king and then penetrate with his king on the other side. However, there is another element in this position. I have pointed out how good the knight is at removing blockaders. The a-pawn is already far advanced and, should the black king end up blockading it on a8, it will only take one check at c7 or b6 to promote the pawn. Lein could prevent this by playing 11...♖d5 but then White's king really will start gobbling up kingside pawns after 12 ♕d6. Instead he decides to advance the e-pawn but this leaves his king in great danger now that the knight can no longer head back via d5.

**11...e5 12 fxe5 fxe5 13 ♖b4 e4 14 a6 ♕b8 15 ♖c6+ ♕a8 16 ♖e7**

Bringing the knight within range of the crucial squares c7 and b6 and preventing Black's knight from returning via f5. If Black should now move his knight, White is ready to strike with ♕b6 and ♖e7-d5-c7+.

**16...♕a7 17 ♕b5 g5?**

Even so Black should have tried to bring his knight back via c2 or g4. Now he loses by force.

**18 ♖c8+ ♕a8 19 ♖d6 ♖f1**

19...♖d5 prevents mate but after 20 ♖xe4 White is simply a pawn up and can prepare at leisure to march his king over to Black's pawns.

**20 ♕b6**

Now Black is defenceless against ♖b5-c7.

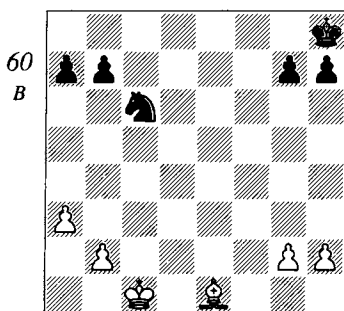
**20...♖d2 21 a7! 1-0**

White's last move wasn't so much to move his pawn nearer the queening square as to give his king a square at a6. After 21...e3 22 ♖b5 ♖c4+ 23 ♕a6 Black is two tempi too slow.

## Knight v Bishop endings

Despite the similar material values of these pieces, they have very different strengths, which emerge in very different types of positions. With pawns on just one side of the board the knight is a very effective piece compared to the bishop – being able to move quickly to the other side of the board is not a useful skill in this kind of position. However, in open positions with pawns on both sides of the board the bishop can often prove its superiority.

### The power of the bishop in open positions



**Ilinčić (2445) – Čabrilo (2515)**  
*Cetinje 1992*

White has a definite advantage because of the superiority of bishop over knight in an open position and the better position of his king.

(60) White has just exploited Black's lack of a flight-square for his king to exchange off an annoyingly active rook at e2: the resulting ending is a perfect example of the bishop's dominance over the knight in open positions. I want to emphasize that this in itself is not a winning advantage: there are three other factors working in White's favour:

1) The fact that his king can reach its fourth rank before Black's can. If Black had time to reach d5 with his king then he could set up an impenetrable blockade by transferring his knight to e6 and pawns to light squares.

2) It is also important that the black knight has no reliable central outposts, i.e. squares on which it can be defended by pawns.

3) In general in endings, the fewer pawns that are left on the board, the greater the defender's drawing chances. Here, however, the fact that both sides only have four pawns left makes Black's task harder since it is more difficult for him to use them to keep out the white king. Should Black fail in this and try to use his king to launch a counter-assault on White's position then he is still likely to come off worse. If both sides manage to capture some pawns and a race starts between passed pawns on opposite wings then the superiority of the bishop will become even more apparent: its long-range abilities allow it to support its own pawns whilst hindering the advance of Black's.

1...♔g8 2 ♖d2 ♕f7 3 ♔e3 ♖e6 4 ♗c3

The first hint of trouble for Black – if his pawns could all stay on their second rank forever then White's king could never infiltrate.

4...g6 5 ♖e4!

5 ♕f4, hoping for quick penetration via g5 and h6, looks tempting but after 5...h5 6 ♔g5 ♕f7 White cannot make any further progress on the kingside. The key to success in this ending is to keep open the threat of infiltration on both sides of the board and then execute it at the most unpleasant moment for Black.

5...h5

Black prefers to defend a weak g-pawn rather than a weak h-pawn although he might have regretted this decision later. If you are unconvinced by White's chances of converting his advantage into a win if

Black should simply wait, then Ilinčić gives this variation: 5...♖d6 6 ♙e1 ♗e6 7 ♙g3 ♜e7 8 ♙f2 ♜c6 9 ♙c5! “with a winning advantage”. Players annotating their own victories are not generally noted for their objectivity and I would have liked to see more justification of this assessment. Ilinčić’s idea is that Black cannot simply maintain the status quo. His knight has to stay at c6 to guard the a-pawn whilst his king cannot move from e6 without allowing ♖d5 (the point of 9 ♙c5 was to prevent it going to d6). He could still play 9...h5 but this only delays the inevitable for a move: White would play a waiting move such as 10 h3 and Black would have to move a queen-side pawn anyway. 9...b6 is particularly undesirable since it leaves two pawns on the same coloured squares as White’s bishop, while after 9...a6 White manoeuvres his bishop round to the h2-b8 diagonal and prepares to bring his king into c5.

6 ♙e1

Having forced some kingside concessions White now turns his attentions to the other side.

6...♜e5 7 ♙f2 ♜c4

I can sympathize with this move although it does hasten the end. I have already indicated the problems Black faces if he tries to maintain the status quo so he seizes the opportunity of reducing the number of pawns on the board. If White refuses the pawn exchange with 8 ♙d4 then 8...♜d6+ followed by 9...a6 equalizes since ...♖d5 will follow. The fact that White’s king is on a more active square than its opposite

number really is an important part of White’s advantage. However, White is quite happy to go along with Black’s proposed swap of b-pawn for a-pawn for two reasons:

1) He will still be left with two rook’s pawns (remember that they cause knights more discomfort than any other pawns).

2) The knight will find it particularly difficult to return to a central position from b2 whereas the bishop, being a long-range piece, can recentralize in just one move.

8 ♙xa7! ♜xb2 9 ♖d4!

Now the need to extricate the knight *and* prevent White’s king infiltrating overstretches Black’s resources. Having stopped ...♜c4 White is suddenly threatening the vicious 10 ♖c3 trapping the knight (10...♜d1+ 11 ♖c2 or 10...♜a4+ 11 ♖b3). This is a good example of the impotence of a knight at the edge of the board.

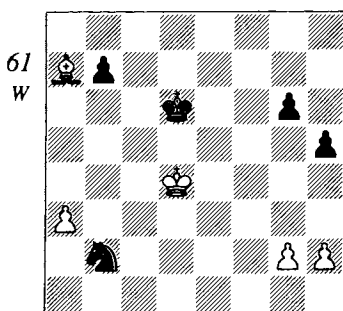
9...♖d6 (61)

10 ♙b8+!

A beautifully thematic move. The bishop was doing a good job restricting the knight but it is so active in this kind of open position that it can also hassle Black’s king. A simple check is enough to throw his defences into chaos. Whichever wing the harassed king makes for, the white king can confidently head for the pawn(s) on the other side secure in the knowledge that with passed pawns on opposing wings the bishop will outclass the knight.

10...♗e6

10...♖c6 is of course met by 11 ♗e5 and the kingside pawns drop off

**Ilinčić – Čabrilo***Cetinje 1992*

White wins because of the superiority of his bishop over the ineffectual knight and because his king can now reach a dominant post on the fifth rank.

quickly, e.g. 11...♖c4+ 12 ♖f6 ♗xa3 13 ♖xg6 ♗c4 (to prevent ♙e5) 14 ♖xh5 b5 15 ♙f4! and the bishop reaches c1 in time to catch the pawn whilst the knight has no chance of stopping White's pawns. However, I wonder what the outcome of this kind of variation would be had Black not weakened his kingside with 5...h5. At the time the move looked innocuous but now it means that White can capture the kingside pawns at least one move more quickly.

**11 ♖c5 ♖d7**

11...♖f5 looks tempting since 12 ♖b6 can be answered by 12...♗c4+ but it isn't too difficult for White to arrange to capture the b-pawn without losing the a-pawn. The simplest way of doing this is to play ♖b5, a4-a5 and then bring the bishop round to attack the hapless knight. Then there won't be anything preventing ♖b6 and ♖xb7.

**12 ♖d5!**

12 ♖b6 ♖c8 achieves nothing, whereas now White is operating from a position of even greater strength and maintains the option of infiltrating on either side.

**12...♗d3 13 ♙g3!**

I am being generous with the exclamation marks around here for Ilinčić's moves but he is providing a classic demonstration of the bishop's superiority over the knight in open positions. To 'dominate' a knight (i.e. restrict it as much as possible) the bishop is best placed three squares away – for instance, a knight at d1 would be completely dominated by a bishop at d4. Here White's pieces cooperate beautifully to restrict the knight: again it is in great danger of being trapped. Meanwhile, Black's king is an impotent bystander.

**13...♗b2**

13...h4 14 ♙xh4 ♗f4+ 15 ♖e4 ♗xg2 further reduces the number of pawns but after 16 ♙g3 Black can only save his knight by heading for a lost king and pawn ending: 16...g5 17 ♖f3 ♗h4+ 18 ♙xh4 gxh4 19 ♖g4.

**14 ♙e1 ♗d3 15 ♙d2 ♗b2 16 h3 ♗d3**

White is gradually improving his position before closing in for the kill. The reason why Black is just playing ...♗b2-d3-b2 is that alternatives lead to disaster: 16...♗a4 takes the knight away from c4 and allows 17 ♖e5 ♖e7 18 ♙b4+ whilst 16...♖e7 fails to 17 ♙g5+ ♖d7 18 ♖e5 when, as usual, winning the a-pawn with 18...♗c4+ won't compensate for the loss of the kingside pawns.

**17 a4**



This was why White played a waiting move last turn. Now that the knight is no longer covering a4 White can further improve his position by advancing the a-pawn.

17...b6

If Black continues with waiting tactics, then White will arrange to play ♖e5 in some position where ...♘c4+ is not a problem, for example 17...♘b2 18 a5 ♘d3 19 ♖d4 ♘b2 20 ♙c1 followed by 21 ♖e5 and, if necessary, a bishop check to dislodge the black king from e7.

18 ♙e3 ♘b2

In theory this is exactly what the doctor ordered: Black eliminates the last queenside pawns. As I've pointed out, with pawns on just one side of the board the knight is actually a better piece than the bishop.

19 ♙xb6 ♘xa4 20 ♙d4

This is the problem. The black knight is completely dominated by the bishop and any attempts to extricate it will involve losing the kingside pawns. Although White can't actually bring his king over to take the knight without freeing Black's king, he can treat the position like a king and pawn ending where he controls the important squares f6 and g7. For example, 20...♖e7 21 ♖e5 ♖f7 22 ♖d6 g5 23 ♖d7 g4 24 h4 g3 25 ♖d6 ♖g6 26 ♖e6 and Black is helpless.

20...h4 21 ♖e5 ♖e7 22 ♖f4 ♖e6 23 ♖g5 ♖d5

Black chooses to extricate his knight at the cost of losing his kingside pawns.

24 ♙f2 ♘b2 25 ♙xh4 ♘d1 26 ♖xg6 ♘e3 27 g4 ♖e4

If Black's king were in front of the pawns, his position would still be hopeless.

28 ♙g5 ♘c4 29 ♙f6 ♘e3 30 ♖g5 ♖f3 31 ♙d4

Ilinčić wanted to co-ordinate his pieces before starting to advance the pawns. Now the knight has to move and the h-pawn can advance unhindered. Therefore **Black resigned**.

A potent demonstration of the power of the bishop in open positions. Imagine the power of *two* bishops against two knights in this kind of position: rather as a queen and knight often co-operate much better together than a queen and bishop because they move so differently and complement instead of duplicating each other's skills, the two bishops are a good example of a duo adding up to more than the sum of its parts. They can quickly attack any square on the board and unless the knights have well-established central outposts, the contest is likely to prove a mismatch. A bishop and knight combination may, however, be able to match the two bishops as long as the knight can reach a good outpost. In general, once a lot of pawns have disappeared, this becomes less likely and the two bishops will come into their own.

### Good knight v bad bishop

The usual distinction made between knights and bishops is that bishops are better in open positions whilst knights operate most effectively in closed positions, especially if the bishop's mobility is hampered by its

own pawns. These good knight v bad bishop positions often arise from complex openings such as the French Defence (where Black's light-squared bishop gives him cause for concern) or the King's Indian Defence (where Black's dark-squared and White's light-squared bishops have often caused their owners' downfall). A bad bishop faces an uphill task against a good bishop but its task may well be hopeless against a knight. I made the point earlier that the problem with a bad bishop isn't so much the inherent weakness of the piece or even the pawns that obstruct it. Rather it is its inability to defend the other colour complex that enables the opposing king to penetrate decisively. This inability becomes especially pronounced when the opposing king has a knight helping it. If there are outposts on opposite coloured squares to a bishop, then a knight can usually reach them. Moreover, if the defender's king is the only factor resisting a decisive infiltration by its opposite number, the knight is an excellent piece to dislodge it.

Rules for playing endings where your opponent has a bad bishop:

1) Aim for exchanges (as long as this doesn't involve exchanging the bad bishop itself, of course). A pure good knight v bad bishop situation is usually even more favourable than the good bishop v bad bishop equivalent.

2) Try to entice more pawns onto the same coloured squares as the bishop and then fix them there.

3) Once a pure knight v bishop ending has been reached, the king should be advanced as far as possible.

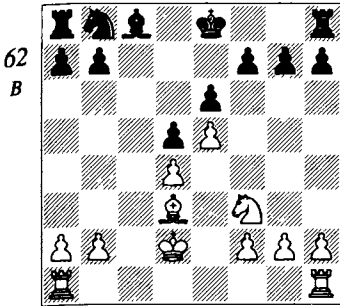
4) If its opposite number is barring the way then the knight may have to attack some of the opposing pawns to force zugzwang and persuade the king to give way. In the example below White carried out a decisive pawn break and didn't even need to send out his knight for this purpose.

For the player with the bad bishop it is often too late once a pure knight v bishop ending has been reached. It really is vital to avoid exchanges and to generate counterplay. If this can be combined with moving pawns off the same coloured squares as the bishop, then so much the better.

Because these positions are closed the action does tend to be very slow as the knight manoeuvres around looking for the right location. I discovered examples where the player with the bishop was tortured for 50 moves but thought better of inflicting these on you. The example I chose is a cautionary tale of how casually some French Defence players treat the problem of the light-squared bishop. I have decided to pick up the action right from the opening since White is playing for the good knight v bad bishop ending from a very early stage.

(62) 1... ♖c6?

The first sign that Black doesn't understand the position: his nightmare scenario is for the only remaining minor pieces to be his bad bishop



**Martin Gonzalez (2420) –  
Barrera**

*St Cugat open 1994*

White stands slightly better because Black's central pawns are fixed on light squares and will permanently hinder his bishop. However, as long as there are other pieces on the board (especially minor pieces) this is not such an important factor.

against White's good knight. Developing the knight now allows White to set up precisely this situation. Instead 1...♔d7! is a much more flexible way to play, for example 2 ♖ac1 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 ♘a5! (or even 3...♘xe5!?) is absolutely fine for Black. If White gives up on the idea of an immediate attempt to swap bishop for knight then Black can prepare counterplay with ...0-0 and ...f6.

2 ♙b5 ♔d7 3 ♙xc6 ♙xc6

A better bet than 3...bxc6, which would leave yet another pawn fixed on a light square as well as giving White a beautiful outpost at c5.

4 ♖hc1 ♕e7 5 ♖c3!

It wasn't important which rook White moved to c1 but I do like this

move: as well as preparing to double rooks on the c-file it also threatens one day to swing the rook over along the third rank and attack Black's kingside pawns. It isn't easy suggesting a defensive strategy for Black but I don't like the choice he made in the game, which involves swapping off all the rooks and thereby giving up any hope of counterplay. Whereas an eleven-player football team may do well despite having a sub-standard player, in a five-a-side match his shortcomings will be much more apparent and significant. Similarly in chess, if you have one particularly ineffectual piece, its inadequacy becomes more obvious with every exchange. Therefore Black should leave the bishop at c6, where it is at least doing a good job of blocking the c-file, and play on the kingside: 5...f6!? doesn't achieve very much at the moment but could be supported by rooks on the f-file. Black is ready to meet 6 exf6+ by 6...gxf6 (but not 6...♙xf6? conceding a huge outpost at e5) when he can hope for counterplay down the g-file. Alternatively Black could try 5...f5, which temporarily puts another pawn on a light square but should White not capture *en passant* then he will follow up with ...f4 gaining some useful space and opening up the g6-b1 diagonal for the bishop.

5...♖hc8?! 6 ♖ac1 a5 7 ♘e1!

White's rooks and king are all well placed but the knight is not pulling its weight so the Spanish master decides to re-route it via d3. Apart from swapping off the rooks, White's

positional dream is to force the black g-pawn to g6. At a stroke this would:

1) Put another pawn on a light square.

2) Give White the f6-square as an outpost.

3) Prevent Black from being able to recapture with the g-pawn after ...f6; exf6.

So White's plan is either ♖c3-g3 or bringing his knight round to h5, both of which put pressure on g7. Martin Gonzalez's move prepares both of these.

7...♙d7?

The problem with this move isn't just that it gives White the option of swapping off rooks. It also has the serious drawback of allowing him to put a rook on the seventh rank, which Black has to spend time ejecting. The upshot is that White not only exchanges all the rooks but also gains some tempi to carry out the plan of ♖e1-d3-f4-h5.

8 ♖c7!

8 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 9 ♖xc8 ♙xc8 10 ♖d3 was possible but Black could then have shored up his g7-square by putting his king on f8. Then, with more black pawns on dark squares it would still have been a tough struggle for White to break through.

8...♖xc7?!

Black didn't have to give up the c-file so easily: 8...♖ab8 could have been followed next move by 9...♙d8 forcing an immediate decision by White. However, these are temporal details and Black faces positional bankruptcy in any case.

9 ♖xc7 ♖b8 10 ♖d3 ♙d8 11 ♖c3 b6

A waste of time since the knight is heading for h5 rather than the ineffective outpost at c5.

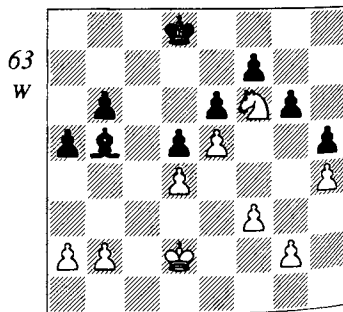
12 ♖f4 ♖c8 13 ♖xc8+ ♙xc8

White actually used a similar device in the game Yermolinsky-Lein in order to reach a favourable pure minor-piece ending: his rook was so well placed on the c-file that Black hastened to swap it off for his own more passive rook. However, the exchange fits in perfectly with White's positional aims. Now Black's king is too far away from the kingside to defend the g7-pawn so he is obliged to make the ultimate positional concession: ...g6.

14 ♖h5 g6 15 ♖f6 h5

Yet another pawn is fixed on a light square but after 15...h6 Black's king could never have come to e7 without allowing ♖g8+. In any case White could have forced ...h5 at his leisure with ♖g8.

16 h4! ♙a6 17 f3 ♙b5 (63)



**Martin Gonzalez – Barrera**

*St Cugat open 1994*

White has effortlessly carried out his strategic goals and reached a winning good knight v bad bishop position.

This position illustrates the paradox of the 'bad' bishop – it does actually have an unimpeded diagonal, a6-f1, and could reach the b1-h7 diagonal – so arguably the black kingside pawns aren't really impeding it. The problem is that the white pawns opposing them are on dark squares so that the bishop has no targets. Neither White's king nor his knight has any defensive duties so they are both free to infiltrate on the kingside dark squares.

**18 g4 hxg4 19 fxg4**

Creating a passed h-pawn will make White's position even more overwhelming, especially when you

consider that Black's equivalent potential passed pawn is at f7 and doesn't epitomize beauty and health.

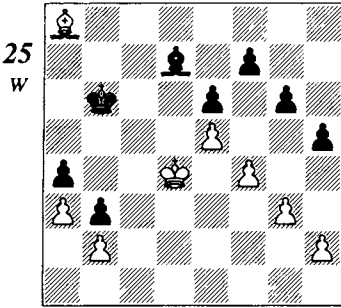
**19...♙e7 20 ♙e3 ♙f8 21 ♙f4 ♙g7 22 ♙g5 ♙c6**

Not very constructive but there isn't anything better.

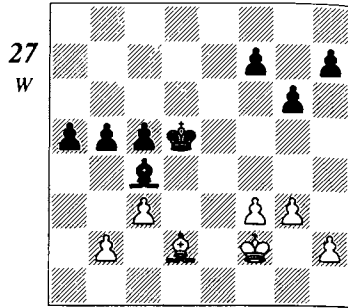
**23 h5 gxh5 24 gxh5 b5 25 h6+ ♙h8 26 ♘g4 1-0**

Black is helpless against the infiltration of White's king. It is rare for the exploitation of a good knight v bad bishop advantage to be this smooth but it does illustrate how straightforward the winning process can be if the defender isn't sufficiently vigilant.

# Exercises



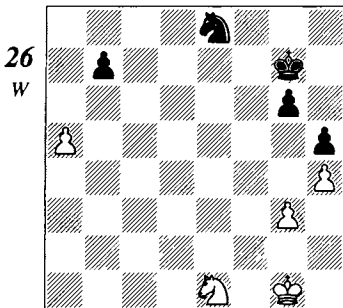
White (to move) has managed to leave his opponent with six pawns on the same colour squares as his bishop and therefore has a very favourable same-coloured bishop ending. However, it isn't immediately apparent how he should improve his position especially as Black's two weak points at a4 and f7 don't look very weak. Can you find a winning plan?



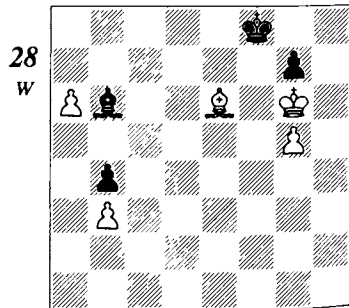
Despite losing a pawn White has managed to reach the relative safety of an opposite-coloured bishop ending. However, this was the sequel:

1 ♖e3 b4 2 ♙c1 ♙b5 3 cxb4 axb4 4 h3 ♙c4 5 ♖d2 ♙b3 6 h4 ♙c6 7 f4 h5 8 ♖d3 ♙b5+ 9 ♖d2 ♙a6 10 ♖e1 ♖c2 11 ♙e3 ♙xb2 12 ♙xc5 b3 0-1

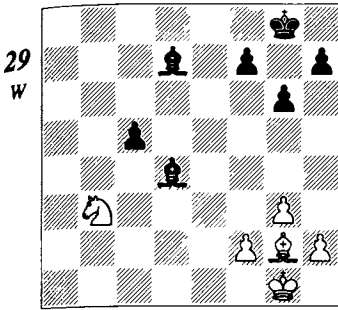
White can only stop the b-pawn by giving up the bishop. Where do you think White went wrong?



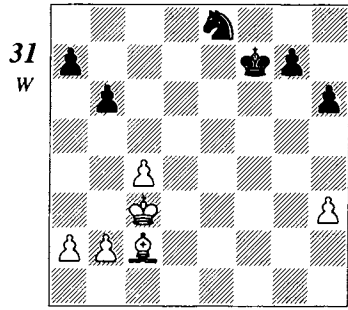
White (to play) had deliberately swapped off from an advantageous middlegame into this almost symmetrical ending. Was his confidence in the position justified?



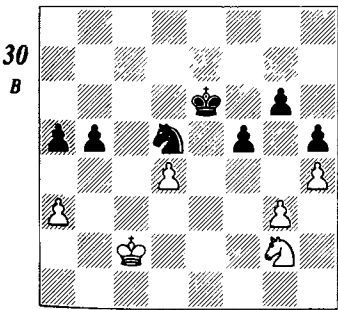
White (to play) decided that his only winning plan was to send his king over to the queenside to support the a-pawn and played 1 ♔f5. Do you agree with him?



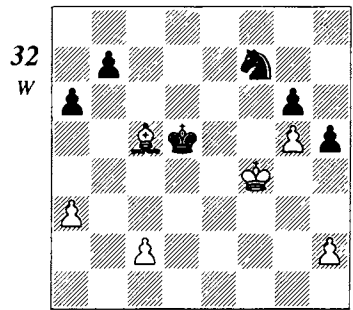
White is a clear pawn down and decided to simplify with 1 ♖xd4. He could also have delayed this decision a move or two but the important alternative was the idea of trying to set up a watertight blockade with ♖d2-c4 in conjunction with ♗d5 or ♗f1. Which of the two plans do you prefer?



White (to play) has bishop v knight in an open position. Would you say that this gives him an advantage here? What do you think his next move should be?



How would you rate Black's winning chances in this ending? What do you think of 1...f4 or 1...♖f6 followed by 2...g5 as winning tries? Can you identify any mistakes by either side in the subsequent play?  
 1...b4 2 axb4 axb4 3 ♖b3 ♖d6 4 ♖c4 ♖c6 5 ♗e1 ♗c3 6 ♗f3 ♗e2 7 ♗e5+ ♖d6 8 ♗xg6 b3 9 ♖xb3  
 1/2-1/2.



What do you think of the respective values of bishop and knight in this position (White to move)? Can you see any tempting plans for either side?

## Solutions

25) **Burchert-Krause, Dortmund 1987**

As well as having a much superior bishop, White also has a more active king and this guarantees that his position is winning. The weak spots in Black's structure may not look that weak at the moment but White does have the capability to lay them bare. His winning plan is a five-stage affair:

1) Transfer the king to b4. There is no specific reason for this but since Black can't do anything, it strengthens White's position without risking anything.

2) Play  $\text{♙f3}$  and  $\text{g4}$  (prefacing these moves with  $\text{h4}$  to force Black to capture).

3) After recapturing on  $\text{g4}$  with the bishop, play  $\text{h5}$ .

4) To avoid a rampant passed h-pawn Black will have to capture and allow the white bishop to  $\text{h5}$ .

5) Black will have to retreat to  $\text{e8}$  with his bishop – exploit the resulting pin on the f-pawn with an  $\text{f5 exf5}$ ;  $\text{e6}$  breakthrough.

If Black ever tries to bring his king over to the kingside then  $\text{♜c5}$  followed by bringing the bishop to  $\text{b5}$  will force the win of Black's queenside pawns.

1  $\text{♜c4 ♙e8}$  2  $\text{♚b4 ♙d7}$  3  $\text{♙f3 ♙e8}$  4  $\text{h4 ♙b5}$  5  $\text{g4 hxg4}$  6  $\text{♙xg4 ♙d7}$  7  $\text{h5 gxh5}$  8  $\text{♙xh5 ♙e8}$  9  $\text{f5 ♙d7}$  10  $\text{♙xf7}$  1-0

After  $10...exf5$  11  $\text{e6}$  Black will have to give up his bishop for the e-pawn. If earlier in the chapter I didn't emphasize sufficiently how dangerous it is to be left with a bad bishop in

a pure same-coloured bishop ending, then this example will hopefully do it for me.

26) **Howell-Bracken, London 1988**

White should win this position because of the tremendous power of the rook's pawn in knight endings. Because a white pawn at  $\text{a5}$  defeats a knight at  $\text{b7}$  (as long as it's White to move), after 1  $\text{♖d3}$  Black is defenceless against 2  $\text{♜c5}$  and 3  $\text{♜xb7}$ . Black's defence was not optimal but, a passed rook's pawn down in a knight ending, he must be lost anyway: 1... $\text{♜d6}$  2  $\text{♜c5 ♜f6}$  3  $\text{♜xb7 ♜b5}$  (3... $\text{♜xb7}$  4  $\text{a6}$  and the pawn promotes by force) 4  $\text{a6 g5}$  5  $\text{♜d6 ♜c7}$  6  $\text{a7 ♜e6}$  7  $\text{♜e8 ♜a8}$  8  $\text{♜g7+ ♜e5}$  and **Black resigned** before I could decide which pawn to take.

27) **Sequera-Palamarek, Novi Sad wom OL 1990**

White completely ignored the fundamental principle of defending opposite-coloured bishop endings: her king should have headed for the queenside to confront the opposing pawn majority, leaving the bishop to cover any weaknesses on the opposite wing. The set-up of bishop on  $\text{c1}$  defending a pawn at  $\text{b2}$  and being hemmed in by a king at  $\text{d2}$  was a disaster waiting to happen and White, not surprisingly, ended up in zugzwang very quickly. Moreover, if they move at all, her pawns should be heading for dark squares so that they are not vulnerable to attack by the black bishop: although it had little impact on the course of the game,



4 h3 looked like a very odd decision. White certainly needed to play f4 at some stage and then had to decide whether it was better to play h4 or leave the pawn at h2. Best play would have been something like this: 1 ♖h6 (preparing to play ♜f2-e3-d2-c1) 1...♙d3 (planning...♜d5-c4-b3) 2 ♜e3 ♜c4 3 ♜d2 ♙f5 4 ♙f8 and now that her pieces are well coordinated I would fancy White's chances of holding the position.

28) **Kudrin-J. Polgar, Brussels 1987**

Bringing the king over to the queenside was indeed the only winning plan. As with no. 27, the defender's bishop has ended up doing the job that the king should really be doing: defending against the opponent's pawn majority. If Black's king were at a7 and her bishop at d4 then White would have absolutely no winning chances but in the game position he will win if his king can reach b7. This might sound a tall order because Black's king is also going to be heading over, but White's bishop is covering some important squares. It turns out that control of c8 and d7 is sufficient to keep the black king cut off whereas Black's bishop is tied down to the a7-g1 diagonal and can do little about the white king's trip to the queenside.

- 1 ♜f5 ♜e7 2 ♜e5 ♙a7  
 2...♜d8 3 ♜d6 doesn't help either.  
 3 ♜d5 ♙e3 4 ♙f5

Of course White's a-pawn is so powerful that he can ignore the threat to his g-pawn and prepare ♜c6.

4...♙a7 5 ♜c6 1-0

There is no defence against ♜b7 and a7.

29) **S. Williams-K. Berg, England 1995**

Not to play a quick ♜xd4 would have been unwise: the two bishops are potentially a very powerful force, particularly as there will be action on both sides of the board. The dark-squared bishop is already pressurizing White's kingside pawns and, since advancing them will only create weaknesses, it does make sense to chop it off. After 1 ♜xd4! the game continued 1...cxd4 2 ♜f1 ♜g7 3 ♜e2 ♙b5+ 4 ♜d2. Of course the d4-pawn gives Black an advantage but it is securely blockaded and too central to decoy the white king effectively. This, combined with the fact that White's pawns are on dark squares, means that there are no real winning chances. White played h4 and f4 to gain some space and used his bishop to cover the light squares: despite playing on for another 40 moves Black didn't manage to generate any threats. The ability of the inferior side to blockade successfully in a same-coloured bishop ending despite being a pawn down is very similar to the Novikov-Serper example earlier in the chapter.

30) **Craig-Garcia, Dubai wom OL 1986**

I have pointed out that knight endings don't have many idiosyncratic features so this exercise is basically a test of your positional judgement. Black has an extra pawn in addition

to various positional pluses so her advantage is a winning one but a little care is needed to convert it. She has a potential outside passed pawn on the queenside and a beautifully centralized knight, which is blockading White's passed pawn. White's king cannot effectively approach Black's queenside pawns, nor can her passive knight move without allowing ...f4. However, there is still the problem of how to make progress since White can respond to a knight move with the annoying ♖f4+. Black's king isn't badly placed but its location is one possible area for improvement in her position. If the f5-pawn were taken off the board then Black's plan would be obvious and crushing: ...♗f5 followed by infiltration at e4 or g4 which leads on to the thought – why not sacrifice a pawn with the immediate ...f4 to reach almost exactly this position? Since after 1...f4, 2 ♖xf4+ ♖xf4 3 gxf4 ♗d5 wins for Black due to the outside passed pawn White has to play 2 gxf4 but after 2...♗f5 I don't see a decent move for White. My other suggested alternative, 1...♗f6 followed by 2...g5, is also a good, if less forcing way to play. 1...b4?! is a perfect example of Tarrasch's maxim: "the threat is stronger than its execution". Whilst there is a 2 pawns v 1 pawn situation on the queenside White has to worry constantly about the threat of a passed pawn. However, as soon as Black goes ahead and creates one (as in the game) White's king can approach it and tie the knight down to its defence. 2...♖xb4+ was a reasonable

alternative to 2...axb4 in order to keep a rook's pawn on the board although White could still bring her king round to a4 to pressurize it. Even after 3 ♗b3 Black should still have played 3...f4 with a probable win but once she had missed this chance there wasn't much left in the position. White's defence throughout was commendable.

31) **Tal-Nei, Pärnu 1971**

White's advantage is large because the position is open, and there are pawn majorities on both sides. The bishop is particularly effective in this kind of situation. These are the static factors but what makes this particular position even more favourable are its specific dynamic features: Black's knight is badly placed at e8, White's king is more active than Black's and finally, it is White's move! Tal played 1 c5!, a temporary pawn sacrifice to ensure he ends up with a passed a-pawn. The alternative plan of 1 b4 and 2 c5 bxc5 3 bxc5 would have yielded a less effective passed c-pawn. In the subsequent play Black didn't manage to create any counterplay and quickly succumbed to the a-pawn:

1...♖c7

After 1...bxc5 2 ♗c4 White's king is dangerously active.

2 ♗c4 ♗e6 3 a4 ♗e5 4 ♗d1

Preparing to activate the bishop via f3 or g4.

4...g6 5 b4 g5

Black's play looks odd but there is very little he can do.

6 ♗g4 ♗e4 7 cxb6 axb6 8 a5  
bxa5 9 bxa5 ♗e5 1-0

Black resigned without waiting for the decisive 10 ♖c5 and 11 ♖c6.

32) **Xie Jun-Adorjan, Budapest 1992**

I included this example to show that generalizations about bishops being good in open positions aren't always helpful. This position is quite open but White's bishop, if not exactly bad, is certainly not an effective piece. The g5-pawn does restrict its mobility whereas Black's pawns are all secure on light squares. In fact it is slightly misleading to describe the position as 'open' – the kingside is closed whilst the powerful position of Black's king and the weakness

of his opponent's queenside pawns mean that he dominates the rest of the board. There really isn't much for White to do whereas Black has the simple plan of ...♗e5-c6, ...♖c4, ...a5-a4, and ...b5-b4, which should give him a decisive passed a-pawn:

**1 ♖e7 b5 2 h4 ♗e5 3 ♖e3 ♗c6 4 ♖f6**

Now Black failed to find the most precise execution of his plan and instead of carrying on with 4...♖c4 followed by ...a5-a4 and ...b4, he played the immediate 4...a5? allowing White to put up stern resistance with 5 ♖d3 – Black won after another 15 moves and some mistakes by White.

## 5 Other endings

This chapter is for those miscellaneous endings that haven't yet been mentioned but do have great practical importance. The emphasis is on material imbalance: an extra pawn in a queen ending, queen against pawn on the seventh, the best way to exploit an extra exchange and then some important and interesting positions where the superior side has an extra piece but cannot exploit it.

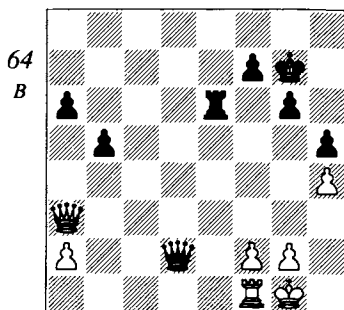
### Queen endings

Queen endings have an undeserved reputation for being difficult endings in which to push home an advantage. There is one big danger for the superior side that results from the queen's great power – perpetual check. However, if your king is secure and you have an extra passed pawn then a queen ending is a very good bet for converting it.

#### Exploiting an extra passed pawn

(64) At the time White was the women's world champion but in spite of a favourable opening, the middle-game complications turned against her and left her in a dire situation. She is a clear pawn down with passive pieces and her Russian opponent is moving in for the kill.

1...♖e1



Chiburdanidze (2500) –

Goldin (2535)

Baden-Baden 1990

Black has a winning position. He can force a queen ending with a strong, passed extra pawn and a secure king.

Black feels that the queen ending is such a straightforward win that he is prepared to swap his active rook for its passive white counterpart. There wasn't anything wrong with advancing the queenside pawns first but Goldin makes the queen ending look such an easy win that I certainly don't intend to criticize him for his decision. There is a self-evident but often disregarded rule about exchanging which says that it is not what comes off that counts but what remains on the board.

2 g3

The tactical point behind Goldin's move was that 2 ♖xa6 ♜xf1+ 3 ♕xf1 ♜d1 is mate.

2...♖xf1+ 3 ♕xf1 a5

A further problem for White is that her queen is tied down to the defence of the a2-pawn, whereas Black's is very active.

4 ♖g1 a4 5 ♕g2 ♜c2 6 ♖g1

Black is about to secure a passed pawn that will win the game for him and all White can do is shuffle her king up and down. In a rook and pawn ending she could either bring her king over to the queenside or try to generate counterplay on the kingside but in a queen ending either of these courses would seriously expose her king. This doesn't just mean allowing a few checks but could result in immediate disaster should a check force the exchange of queens and a winning king and pawn ending.

6...b4!

This is what Black's previous play has been leading up to. He forces a passed pawn and its proximity to the eighth rank means that White will have very little time to create counterplay before the pawn queens.

7 ♜xb4 ♜xa2 8 ♜d4+ ♖h7 9 ♜f6 ♜e6

This is the beauty of queen endings – the side which can afford to exchange off into the king and pawn ending can constantly dictate the action by offering queen swaps with impunity.

10 ♜f3 ♜b3 11 ♜f6 a3 12 ♖g2 ♜b7+

There was no particular reason not to play 12...a2 but in order to promote the pawn Black needs to arrange for his queen to control a1 whilst still defending the f7-pawn. Thus the a7-square is the obvious

goal for his queen to aim for and he decides to put it there before advancing the pawn.

13 ♖h2 ♜a7 14 ♖g1 a2 15 ♜a1

This move marks the beginning of the end. The queen can't move away from a1 whereas Black can prepare the decisive transfer of his queen to b1. One important point to be made about queen and pawn endings is that an advanced passed pawn does have great power: a blockading queen can be removed by its opposite number and the pawn queened without needing help from the king. This isn't true of other blockading pieces.

15...♜a4

Threatening ...♜b3-b1+.

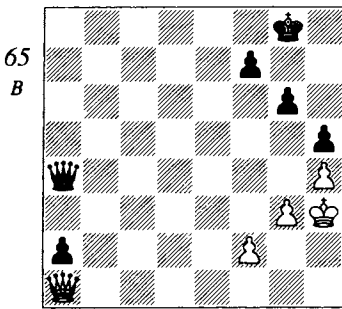
16 ♖h2 ♖g8!

A patient move showing good technique. As Black is so firmly in control, he calmly arranges for his pieces to be on ideal squares before trying to force a win. 16...♜b3 would have allowed 17 ♜f6, when Black hits the old problem of needing to cover f7 and a1 and finds that 17...♖g8 is well answered by 18 ♜d8+ ♖g7 19 ♜d4+.

17 ♖h3 (65)

17...♜a7

The immediate 17...♜b3 allows the irritating 18 ♜e5 but Goldin's move is another beautifully subtle and patient move which forces further kingside weaknesses before moving in for the kill. The f2-pawn is *en prise* and 18 ♖g2 allows 18...♜b7+ followed by 19...♜b1. Goldin gives his move an exclamation mark and I was going to give it two. However, I then noticed that

**Chiburdanidze – Goldin***Baden-Baden 1990*

Black wins by transferring his queen to b1, exploiting the fact that in queen endings it is such a simple matter to remove the blockader.

17...♖e4! would have been a prettier and quicker way to end the game: snap checkmates do crop up unexpectedly in queen and pawn endings and 18 ♜xa2 allows one with 18...♗h1. The threat is 18...♜b1 whilst 18 ♜d1 ♜g4+ and 18 ♜c1 ♜b1 19 ♜c8+ ♔h7 20 ♜c4 ♜f5+ (or 20...a1♜) are hopeless.

**18 f4 ♜a4 0-1**

White resigned because she is in zugzwang: 19 g4 allows 19...♜b3+ and 20...♜b1, 19 ♔g2 and 19 ♔h2 meet a similar fate after 19...♜c2+ and 19 f5 is most simply met by 19...gxf5 when White still faces exactly the same dilemma.

However, Black's task was only straightforward because he had the ideal defensive formation that I mentioned in Chapter 2 (f7/g6/h5). Were his f-pawn advanced then his task would have been much harder. Then the only way to combine king protection with forcing the advance of

the a-pawn would have probably been to transfer his king to the queenside without worrying about losing pawns on the kingside. White would certainly need to play accurately for many moves to draw, if indeed it is possible at all.

**Queen + pawn v queen**

One type of ending that does occur frequently (usually out of a pawn race in a king and pawn ending) is queen and pawn against queen. If the defender's king is in front of the pawn then he should draw easily. The only danger is that the queens might come off, leaving a lost king and pawn ending but it is very unlikely that the superior side will be able to force this. More interesting and common are those positions where the defender's king doesn't manage to blockade. These are the guidelines for both sides:

**For the superior side**

1) As usual, the nearer the pawn is to the side of the board, the less favourable the position is. Positions with rook's pawns should be drawn as the king has so little shelter but it is still worthwhile trying to win them.

2) Moving your king to the same file/diagonal/rank because your opponent's king can be a useful way of stopping your opponent checking since at some point your queen will be able to interpose and force the queens off.

3) Regrettably, opponents don't often allow queen swaps, so winning

the game involves a repetitive and laborious process: a long series of checks will have to be evaded. If this is achieved then the pawn can advance. However, this will again allow a series of checks and so the process continues.

4) In general your queen is well-placed on a central square. The game below is a good example of giving checks to centralize the queen as much as possible before advancing the pawn.

### For the defender

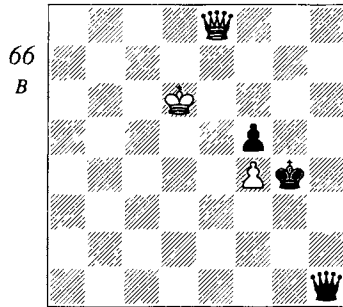
1) Avoid reaching this ending in the first place.

2) Failing that, it is important to make a quick decision as to whether or not your king has any chance of reaching a square in front of the pawn or of attacking it directly. If not, then it belongs **as far away from the pawn as possible**. This is partly to avoid obstructing your queen, which needs as much space as possible when trying to give perpetual check. It is also to reduce the chances of an interposition by the opposing queen which can give a counter-check or pin your queen. In either case the queens may be forced off. Specifically this means your king should be trying to avoid the same file/diagonal/rank as the opposing king.

3) Don't forget about stalemate as a defensive weapon. With the black king at h1, for instance (and it needs to be in a far corner anyway), a check at g3 that also attacks White's queen could force an immediate draw.

4) Computer databases can now play these endings perfectly and have been used to point out error after error when grandmasters have played them. Probably for the human the most useful characteristics for conducting a successful defence are patience and determination.

Because these endings often drag on for 50 moves or more, I have picked an example where the defence was particularly bad and the pawn quickly triumphed – I hope that this will be more interesting and instructive.



### Tilenbaeva – T. Hernandez

*Moscow wom OL 1994*

Black, to play, has very good winning chances because she has an f-pawn (rather than a less favourable g- or h-pawn). Her advantage quickly becomes decisive because White refuses to move her king away from the pawn.

(66) Despite reaching a completely drawn ending of bishop and three pawns v bishop and three (all on the kingside), the players battled

on and when White made an over-ambitious winning attempt, Black managed to force a favourable king and pawn ending. In the diagram position the players have just queened but Black has the upper hand due to her king being nearer the remaining pawns and the fact that she is to move.

1... ♖d1+!

A good, safe move that drives White's king further away from the impending passed pawn and also brings the black queen to a more central position. Capturing the pawn would have allowed an immediate draw: 1... ♕xf4 2 ♖e5+ ♔g4 3 ♗g7+ ♕h3 (3... ♕f3?? 4 ♖b7+) 4 ♖h7+. In this variation White is helped by the bad position of the black queen and the proximity of her king to her opponent's king and pawn.

2 ♕c5

Moving the king to the e-file allows an immediate trade of queens but this move, although not bad in itself, does suggest that White is being over-optimistic and is still hoping to profit from having her king near the pawn. 2 ♕c7, trying to reach a8 as soon as possible with the king, is more thematic.

2... ♗c2+ 3 ♕d5?!

3 ♕b6.

3... ♗d2+ 4 ♕c5 ♗c3+ 5 ♕d5?!

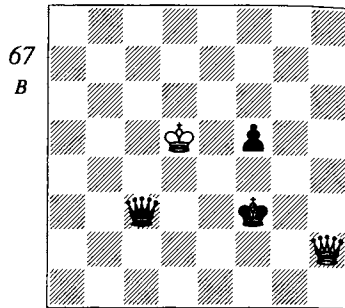
Black is very sensibly trying to centralize her queen as much as possible before taking the pawn, whereas White is playing a very dangerous game in stubbornly refusing to move her king to the b-file.

5... ♕xf4! 6 ♖b8+ ♕f3

Black's queen is well-centralized whereas White's king is badly placed

in the no-man's-land near the pawn. White's queen is being obstructed by her clumsy partner and not surprisingly the checks have already run out.

7 ♖h2 (67)



**Tilenbaeva – T.Hernandez**

*Moscow wom OL 1994*

Black wins because White's king is so badly placed, although some accuracy is required.

7... ♗d3+?

This, however, is pushing brinkmanship too far. With the defender's king close to the pawn her opponent does have to remain alert, and this check drives White's king perilously close to the pawn. 7... ♕g4! was the way to defend against the threat of 8 ♖h3+ and show that White's king really is badly placed: 8 ♖g2+ ♗g3 9 ♖e2+ ♗f3+ is the proof. If White persists with 8 ♕e6 then simply 8...f4 is possible – after 9 ♖g2+ ♗g3 10 ♖e2+ ♗f3 it turns out that White needed the e6-square for his queen.

8 ♕c5?

But why not be consistent and start an attack on the pawn? After 8 ♕e5! the white king would have



been definitely out of no-man's-land and aggressively placed in enemy territory. Black would have had to try 8...♖b5+ and hope for the best because the obvious 8...♗e4+ 9 ♔f6 f4 allows an aesthetic draw: 10 ♖h1+ ♕e3 11 ♗e1+ ♔d3 12 ♖b1+. The white queen just follows the king around, checking on the same rank/file/diagonal as her opposite number.

8...♗e3+ 9 ♔d5?!

Now that everything is in order for Black it would again have been more prudent to switch plans and move the king away from the pawn.

9...f4

Black's sequence of checks to improve her queen position has, rather fortuitously, turned out well. Because of her opponent's badly placed king, she is now confident of surviving the ensuing sequence of checks.

10 ♖h3+ ♕e2 11 ♗g2+ ♔d3 12 ♖f1+ ♔d2 13 ♗g2+ ♗e2 14 ♗e4

The proximity of White's king enables her to make flashy moves like this (14...♗xe4+?? would lose the pawn) but otherwise it is just a hindrance. Black again prudently improves the position of her queen before pushing the pawn:

14...♗d3+! 15 ♕e5 f3 16 ♖h4

The checks at b4 and f4 both allow counter-checks.

16...♗e3+ 17 ♔d5 f2

Were White's king at a8, she could fight on for many moves. Here she only manages one more.

18 ♖b4+ ♕e2 0-1

White has four checks that don't lose material but all of them allow Black to interpose with check, a

damning indictment of d5 as a square for the white king.

White was obviously unaware here that her best chance was to keep her king as far away from the pawn as possible and her defence was correspondingly inaccurate. Black, on the other hand, made excellent use of the principle of checking to improve the position of her queen (with the exception of her lapse at move 7, where she took it too far) before advancing the pawn, and fully deserved to win.

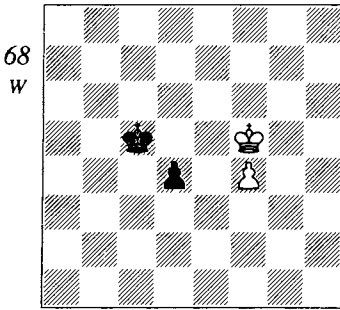
## Queen v far-advanced pawn

These positions also arise frequently from pawn races in king and pawn endings. Unless the pawn cannot be stopped from promoting next move, the inferior side needs four conditions to be satisfied to make a draw:

- 1) The pawn has to be on the seventh rank.
- 2) The pawn has to be a rook's pawn or bishop's pawn.
- 3) The queen mustn't be able to occupy the queening square.
- 4) The opposing king mustn't be too close.

Fortunately for Topalov in the next example he just managed to reach a position where all these conditions were satisfied.

(68) White is behind in the pawn race and to make matters worse his king is blocking his passed pawn. The obvious 1 ♕e4 holds up Black's pawn and frees the way for the f-pawn but loses after 1...♔c4 2 f5 d3



**Topalov (2520) – Antunes (2470)**  
*Candas open 1992*

White, to play, draws because he has a bishop's pawn that he manages to push to the seventh rank. However, he has to find an 'only move' in the diagram position.

3 ♖e3 ♗c3 4 f6 d2 5 f7 d1 ♖ 6 f8 ♗e1+ followed, embarrassingly, by 7... ♗f1+ picking up White's queen. 1 ♖e6 prepares to support the f-pawn but backfires after 1...d3 2 f5 d2 3 f6 d1 ♖ 4 f7 ♗d6+ 5 ♖f5 ♗f8. Black's queen is occupying the queening square, so his king is free to approach and capture the pawn. However, Topalov would have calculated many moves previously that he does have a drawing continuation:

1 ♖g6! d3 2 f5 d2 3 f6 d1 ♖ 4 f7

In order to win here Black needs to be able to play 4... ♖e7 or 4... ♗f8 and, alas, neither is quite legal. Instead he follows the standard technique of approaching the king and arranging a check on his third rank (i.e. the rank behind the pawn) that also attacks the pawn. Black, who is Portugal's top player, would have known by now that he wasn't going

to win and would have been feeling sick since he had had a highly advantageous position since the opening.

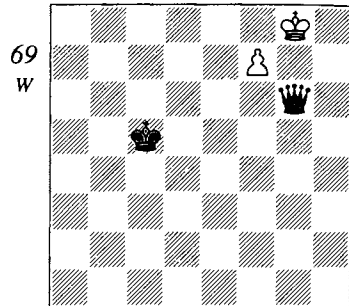
4... ♗d8 5 ♖g7

Because of the dangerous proximity of Black's king, it is particularly important to maintain a threat (f8 ♗) and so stop the king reaching d6.

5... ♗g5+ 6 ♖h8

6 ♖h7 was just as effective but again 6 ♖f8 would have led to catastrophe after 6... ♖d6.

6... ♗f6+ 7 ♖g8 ♗g6+ (69)



**Topalov – Antunes**  
*Candas open 1992*

White, to play, draws because of the stalemate trick but would lose in the equivalent position with a knight's pawn or a centre pawn. A rook's pawn would also draw but for slightly different reasons.

This is it – the crunch position in this type of ending which the superior side should aim for and determines whether the defence will hold. The queen cannot win these positions on her own so the king has to come to her assistance. In order to gain the time for this, the pawn has to

be temporarily stopped and the only way of doing this is to force the defender's king in front of it.

The idea behind  $7... \text{♖g6+}$  is that the king only has two legal moves, one of which blocks the pawn while the other leaves it *en prise*. The peculiarity of the bishop's pawn, however, is that the king can afford to abandon it:

$8 \text{ ♔h8!}$

$8 \text{ ♔f8}$  would have lost to  $8... \text{♕d6}$   $9 \text{ ♔e8 ♔e6}$ , but now White has maintained the threat of promotion, thereby denying Black the time to approach with his king. With the white pawn at h7 instead of f7 the position after  $7... \text{♖g6+}$  is still critical but  $8 \text{ ♔h8}$  would set up an immediate stalemate and again would prevent Black improving the position of his king. In fact my software program claims that Antunes has an advantage of 7.7 pawns in this position but he obviously disagreed and decided to force an immediate draw:

$8... \text{♗xf7}$  stalemate (1/2-1/2)

When facing a knight's pawn or centre pawn on the seventh rank, or any pawn on the sixth, the side with the queen has to go through a methodical and fairly straightforward winning process:

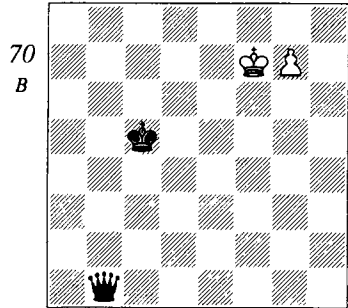
1) By a mixture of checks and, if necessary, pins, the queen approaches the opposing king.

2) The queen checks on its third rank (if the pawn is on its seventh rank) from a square that also attacks the pawn (as in diagram 69).

3) To hold on to the pawn, the defender's king has to move in front of

it. This gives its opposite number the time it needs to start approaching the pawn.

4) The process is repeated until the superior side's king is close enough to force mate or the win of the pawn.



**Kouatly (2440) –  
Marjanović (2505)**  
*Kolhapur 1987*

Black, to play, wins by the four-stage process explained above because the pawn is a knight's pawn.

(70)  $1... \text{♗f5+}$   $2 \text{ ♔e8 ♗g6+}$

Black continues with the thematic plan. However, Marjanović points out that his king was already close enough to the pawn to be able to allow it to queen:  $2... \text{♕d6!}$   $3 \text{ g8 ♗}$  (White could promote to a knight to avoid the immediate mate but queen v knight is a trivial win)  $3... \text{♗d7+}$   $4 \text{ ♔f8 ♗e7\#!}$  This might seem like an incidental side-variation, but imagine being Black in the position with all the pieces being shifted a file to the right. Then the favourable knight's pawn would suddenly become an unfavourable rook's pawn and this

mating variation would become the only way to win.

3 ♖f8

Black has already completed stage 1 and now moves on to stage 2:

3... ♗f6+

Repeating the motif of diagram 69, only this time with more success.

4 ♖g8 ♖d6

Stage 3. Now Black needs to repeat the process.

5 ♖h7 ♗f7!

The pin is sometimes a quicker method than the check.

6 ♖h8 ♗h5+

It turns out that the knight's pawn is particularly unfavourable for the defender – Black doesn't even need to check on his third rank to force the king in front of the pawn.

7 ♖g8 ♖d7

7... ♖e7?? would have been a very inappropriate end to the game.

8 ♖f8

I'm surprised that Kouatly played on for so long but I'm grateful to him for doing so since it gave his grandmaster opponent the chance to demonstrate the standard winning technique right up to mate:

8... ♗e8#

The queen does have other weapons in her armoury in the battle against the advanced pawn. Particularly against a rook's pawn on the seventh rank there are some surprise mating possibilities if the superior side's king is nearby. If Black has a pawn at a2, for instance, then White can even allow ...a1 ♗ as long as he can answer it with ♖b3. With his

king as far away as d5 he can arrange to check on the seventh rank, for instance at d2, and answer ...♖b1 with ♖c4. Then after ...a1 ♗ it turns out that following ♖b3 Black's queen is so badly placed that it cannot prevent mate next move.

## Rook against minor piece

Rooks are supposed to be worth a couple of pawns more than bishops or knights. Whether a rook actually triumphs in practice depends on the players' skill in forcing a position that favours their piece.

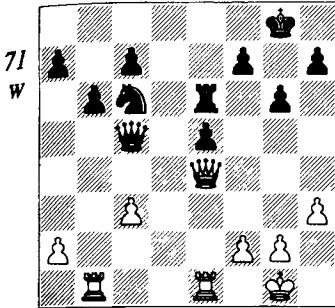
The player with the rook has three basic aims:

1) To swap off pieces into a pure rook v minor piece ending. For instance, the ending of two rooks v rook and bishop can be difficult to win since the rook and bishop complement each other, whereas the rooks duplicate each other's functions and often only come into their own if the opposing king is exposed. Exchanging a pair of rooks, however, can make the lone bishop look impotent against an active rook.

2) To keep pawns on both sides of the board (assuming he is trying to win). As the chapter on minor-piece endings suggested, knights cope badly with action on both sides of the board and bishops cope fairly well but an active rook can make either piece look ineffectual.

3) To open up the position – rooks don't function well when there are no open lines, whereas a knight usually does.

As the next example shows, a knight is particularly vulnerable if White manages to achieve these aims, although he needed some help from Black.



### Velimirović – Haag

Vrnjačka Banja 1966

White stands slightly better because Black can undertake very little without opening lines for the white rooks.

(71) Here Black has two good pawns for the exchange and the position is fairly closed. Moreover, it is far from being a pure rook v knight situation since both sides also have a queen and rook. However, on the minus side, Black doesn't have any dangerous passed pawns nor does his knight have an effective outpost. He also has to try to keep the position closed, which is never easy if your opponent is trying to open it. In particular, Black has to resist the temptation of pawn-grabbing so as not to open lines for White's rooks.

1 ♖bd1!

Velimirović is a very aggressive player. In this game he had hit his opponent with the Scotch Gambit and

now he offers a further pawn sacrifice. The rook was doing nothing at b1 and the d-file is the only open file on the board so 1 ♖bd1 is clearly the move that White would like to play. The only question is – can he afford to sacrifice the c-pawn?

1... ♜xc3?

I have emphasized how important it is for Black to keep the position closed and this move flies in the face of that advice. After 1... ♖d6! (keeping the white rook out of d7) 2 ♖d3 (defending the c-pawn and preparing to double on the d-file) Black can always use his king to shore up the d-file, e.g. 2... ♔f8 3 ♜ed1 h5 (taking the force out of a possible ♜h4) 4 ♜xd6? cxd6 5 ♜d5 ♜xd5 6 ♜xd5 ♔e7 White has achieved his aim of reaching a pure rook v knight ending but has lost his only open file, cannot penetrate with his rook and consequently has no advantage: contrast this with the endgame that Velimirović reaches in a few moves. Rather than exchanging so quickly in this variation White would have done better to maintain the tension, but Black should survive.

2 ♜c1!

The c-file is even more useful than the d-file because it has specific targets on it.

2... ♜d4?!

As Black I would have been trying to keep pieces on. As long as his queen stays on the a5-e1 diagonal, White cannot take on c6 for fear of leaving his rook at e1 hanging. Although Haag would still have lost his c-pawn after 2... ♜a5 3 ♜ed1, at least he could have hoped to capture the

a-pawn. Then with all his opponent's queenside pawns wiped out, his drawing chances in any ending would have been much greater.

**3 ♖xd4 ♜xd4**

3...exd4 would have lost the knight after an exchange of rooks.

**4 ♜xc7 a6**

Black's position doesn't look too bad. He still has two pawns for the exchange and his knight has a good central outpost. However, Velimirović appreciates that if he can exchange rooks then Black's position will quickly collapse, so he is prepared to give up a pawn to force this.

**5 f4!**

Now Black has to make a difficult decision. 5...f6 allows White's rook complete control of the seventh rank and raises the spectre of back-rank mates whereas after 5...e4, 6 ♜c4 ejects the knight and wins the e-pawn. So Black grabs the pawn – it is a sad reflection on his play that from a situation where he should have been trying to keep pieces on and the position closed, he has swapped both rooks and queens and opened the c- and e-files in the space of five moves.

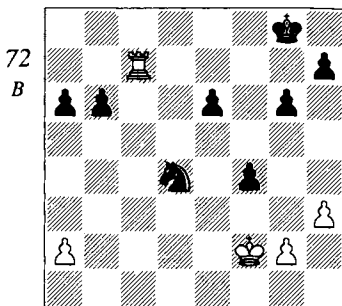
**5...exf4 6 ♜xe6 fxe6**

6...♜xe6 would invite the immediate 7 ♜c6, whereupon Black would quickly lose both his queenside pawns. This kind of position is very frustrating for Black. If he could persuade White to sign an agreement to abolish all the queenside pawns then he could count on a draw because with all the pawns on one side of the board Black can usually hold with only one pawn for the exchange. Of course Velimirović would never have

signed any such agreement. As things stand, the knight will have trouble defending the a- and b-pawns. Meanwhile, White's a-pawn is fairly safe.

**7 ♔f2 (72)**

White's rook is already so well placed that he decides to improve his king position.



### **Velimirović – Haag**

*Vrnjačka Banja 1966*

The power of the rook on the seventh means that White stands clearly better in spite of his nominal material disadvantage. Black's only drawing chance is somehow to swap off the a2-pawn and leave himself with only one wing to defend.

**7...h5?**

Yet another bad decision, after which Black is definitely lost. The move is simply too slow and has a unfortunate tactical drawback. Instead, 7...e5! (planning to generate some counterplay with ...e4-e3+) 8 ♜e7 ♜c6 9 ♜e6 ♜b4 would have made it hard for White to keep his a-pawn.

**8 ♜d7!**

I suppose the idea of 7...h5 was to centralize his king without losing the h-pawn. However, White acts first.

8...e5 9 ♖e7

Now the tactical drawback of 7...h5 becomes obvious. The g-pawn has been weakened so that 9...♘c6 is met by 10 ♖e6 when White will win every pawn on the sixth rank and probably a couple more besides.

9...b5 10 ♖xe6

Winning a pawn, depriving the knight of its support and still leaving Black with the problem of how to cover all his weak pawns.

10...♙f7 11 ♗d5 ♘e6 12 ♗d6 a5 13 ♙f3

A cheeky move, effectively saying to Black: "Pah! I can take your queenside pawns any time. I'm going to improve my position first." (13 ♗d5 would have won a pawn immediately.)

13...b4 14 ♖a6

Allowing 14...a4 as well wouldn't have been a good idea because then Black could have followed up with ...b3 and left White struggling to avoid the exchange of his a-pawn.

14...g5 15 ♖xa5 ♙f6 16 ♙e4

Velimirović probably went out for a self-congratulatory cigarette around here. Black's plight is desperate.

16...g4 17 hxg4

There was nothing wrong with 17 ♖xh5 but Velimirović has a specific simplifying manoeuvre in mind.

17...hxg4 18 ♖f5+ ♙e7

18...♙g6 can be met the same way: even moving the king to h5 in the king and pawn ending won't save the g-pawn.

19 ♖xf4! ♘xf4 20 ♙xf4

This is one of those positions where White will be able to win with just his g-pawn if Black stays passive (go back to Chapter 1 if you're not sure how!) so Haag decides to head for the a-pawn and take his chances in a race.

20...♙f6 21 ♙xg4 ♙e5 22 ♙h5 ♙d4 23 g4 ♙c3 24 g5 ♙b2 25 g6 ♙xa2 26 g7 b3 27 g8 ♗ ♙a1

Exploiting the idea that 28 ♗xb3 is stalemate. However, White would win even if the pawn were already on the seventh – so Black is just having his little joke before resigning.

28 ♗a8+ 1-0

The simplest method of winning is to arrange a check at a4 or c4 to force the black king to b2 and then gradually to approach with the white king.

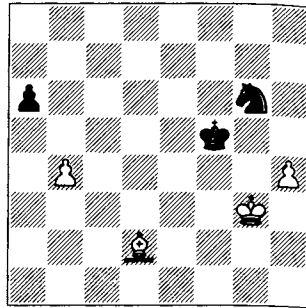
Although bishops stand a better chance than knights against rooks, the principles for both sides are basically similar so I'm not going to give a separate example. I should point out that bishops give surprisingly good drawing chances if the pawns are all on one side of the board. As long as the bishop is 'good' (i.e. pawns on opposite-coloured squares to the bishop) the side with the bishop can often draw without any extra pawns. For instance, in a position where both sides have g- and h-pawns and Black has a dark-squared bishop, he can draw by putting his pawns at g6 and h5. It doesn't matter if his king is forced to the back rank as long as his bishop prevents the white king from reaching g5 or f6.

## Where an extra piece is not enough

### Bishop + wrong-coloured rook's pawn

If it is slightly unfair that opposite-coloured bishop endings are so hard to win, then the fact that bishop and the so-called 'wrong-coloured rook's pawn' v king ending is drawn must rank as a monstrous miscarriage of justice. Normally the only danger of not winning an ending a bishop up is allowing all your pawns to be exchanged. However, leaving yourself with just a rook's pawn is useless if the bishop does not control the queening square. It simply isn't possible to drive the opposing king out from in front of the pawn. This means that a defender facing a bishop can often draw grim-looking endings by systematically eliminating, at any cost, any pawns except the wrong-coloured rook's pawn. In the next example Gelfand has done a good job of exchanging off pawns, in any case a sensible drawing technique, but apparently hasn't managed to lumber his opponent with a wrong-coloured rook's pawn.

(73) Given the chance, White's winning plan would be similar to the Ilinčić-Cvitan example in the last chapter: he would put his bishop on e1 (to protect both pawns), move his king to f3/e3 and then wait for the black king to go one way before heading for the other side, either to the queenside to take the a-pawn or to the kingside to support the h-pawn.

73  
B

**Tukmakov (2580) –  
Gelfand (2510)**  
*Sverdlovsk 1987*

Black to play draws despite his pawn minus and the disadvantage of having to struggle with knight against bishop in a position with pawns on both sides of the board. He has managed to leave White with only two pawns, but equally important is the possibility of turning the knight's pawn into a wrong-coloured rook's pawn.

He shouldn't advance the h-pawn too quickly (to h6 for instance) since this would give Black the chance to draw immediately with a ...♠xb4; ♠xb4 ♖xh6 sequence. This explains why Tukmakov chose last move to defend the pawn (♗f3-g3) rather than advance it. However, he should have tried ♠e1, as Black now struck:

**1...♠xh4!! 2 ♖xh4 ♗e6!**

Black's idea is to play ...a5 and reach a standard bishop + wrong-coloured rook's pawn v king position. However, 2...a5?? immediately would have been an embarrassing mistake since after 3 bxa5 Black can't stop the pawn!



## 3 ♖e3

An optimistic attempt to stop Black's plan. If White has time for ♖b6 then he will always be able to preserve his pawn as a b-pawn. He can follow up with ♖a5 if necessary and then simply bring his king over to pocket the a-pawn. Black's reply is forced:

## 3...a5 4 bxa5

After 4 b5 ♔d5 White cannot cover the b-pawn and keep the a-pawn covered. He would only win if his king were near enough to take care of the a-pawn.

## 4...♔d7 5 a6 ♔c7 6 ♖a7

A desperate attempt to prevent the black king reaching the corner. I don't intend to give a variation showing what happens if it does reach a8 because there simply isn't a constructive winning plan. Try it if you don't believe me.

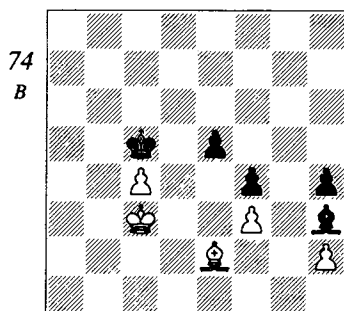
## 6...♔c6

This move (threatening 7...♔b5) is necessary. If White had time to bring his king up to d5 then Black's king would be gradually driven away from the corner. After the text-move White has to move his bishop to save the a-pawn but 7 ♖b8 is answered by 7...♔b6 8 a7 ♔b7 and a retreat along the a7-g1 diagonal by 7...♔c7. So the players agreed a draw.

### Bishop + right-coloured rook's pawn

It is less well-known that bishop + right-coloured rook's pawn can also be drawn with the prerequisites that the defender needs to persuade the pawn to advance to the sixth rank

and also needs his own pawn blocking it.



### Kinsman (2355) – de Firmian (2590)

Gausdal 1995

Black stands better but is unable to win due to the 'bishop + right-coloured rook's pawn' factor.

(74) de Firmian has made a valiant attempt at winning a balanced same-coloured bishop ending. Two of White's three remaining pawns are on light squares and consequently his dark squares are vulnerable. Moreover, Black's king is a beautifully placed blockader of the white passed pawn and Black can immediately generate a dangerous passed pawn of his own:

## 1...e4 2 fxe4

2 ♔d2 exf3? 3 ♖xf3 ♔xc4 isn't dangerous for White as his king can come round to the secure blockading square f2 but after the simple 2...e3+ Black's position would have improved considerably since the diagram.

## 2...♖g2

Now Black wins a piece by force.

## 3 ♔d3 f3 4 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 5 ♔e3

White is only safe if he can force Black's h-pawn to h3 so he rushes his king over to attack it.

5... ♖g2 6 ♕f4 h3

It might look odd to fall in so easily with White's plans but after 6... ♖xc4 7 h3! both players' h-pawns will drop off. Kinsman had seen that he could force ...h3 when he played 2 fxe4 and probably even before that. Poor de Firmian was probably cursing himself for not having left the h-pawn at h6.

7 ♕e3

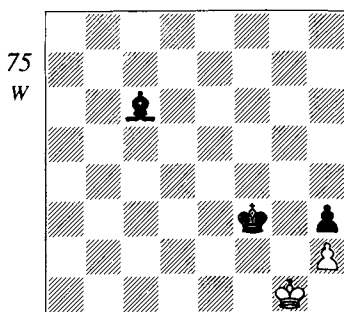
Mission accomplished so White's king heads back towards g1. His passed pawns are completely superfluous and there is no point trying to preserve them.

7... ♖xc4 8 ♕f2 ♖d4 9 e5 ♕xe5  
10 ♕g1 ♕f4 11 ♕f2 ♖c6 12 ♕g1  
♕f3 (75)

Although the draw is very simple, White can't simply fall asleep: 13 ♕h1?? ♕f2# would have been a tragic end to the game.

13 ♕f1 ♕e3 14 ♕g1 ♖g2 ½-½

If a game is going to be a draw then forcing stalemate always strikes me as a good way of claiming a moral victory. Clearly Black can make no progress but if his pawn were further back then his king could slide into h3 and pick up White's h-pawn. Then the win is trivial as the bishop covers the queening square. If Black's pawn were at g3 and White's at g2 then the



### Kinsman – de Firmian

Gausdal 1995

Draw because Black has no way of driving out the white king.

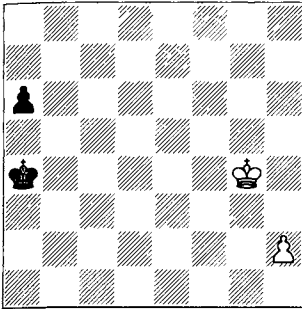
position would still be drawn. White simply shuffles his king up and down between f1, g1 and h1. Black would be winning if he could entice the white king to h1 in a position with his own king at f2 and bishop at f3 but it doesn't require great skill from White to avoid this.

Surprisingly (at least I find it surprising) de Firmian couldn't have won this ending even if he'd had a knight instead of a bishop – once the pawn is at h3 there are still no constructive winning attempts. With a knight + pawn at g3 v pawn at g2, however, the knight does manage to live up to its reputation for manoeuvrability and force a win: Black moves his king to e2 and answers ♕h1 with ... ♖f3. After gxf3, ... ♕f2! (or even ... ♕xf3) is decisive.

## Exercises

33

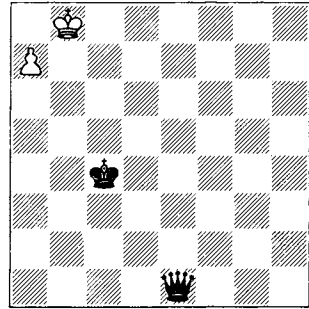
B



The players have just reached the classic pawn-race situation – no great finesse is required but it would have been important to have correctly predicted the outcome long before reaching this position. In the game it was Black to move – what do you think the result was?

35

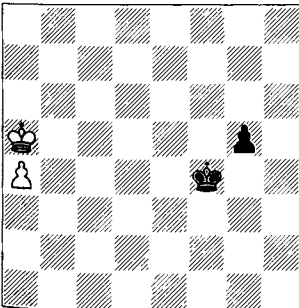
B



Here the pawn race is over and, although his opponent has already queened, White would have been hoping that a rook's pawn on the seventh rank would assure him a draw. On the other hand Black's king is quite close to the action and he was doubtless counting on interfering with White's plans for a smooth pawn promotion. It is Black to move. Who do you think ended up disappointed?

34

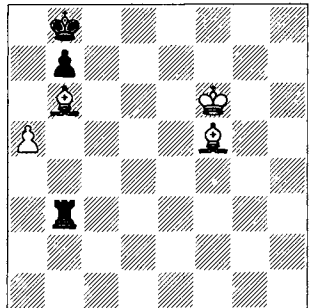
W



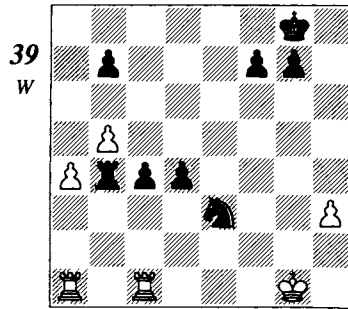
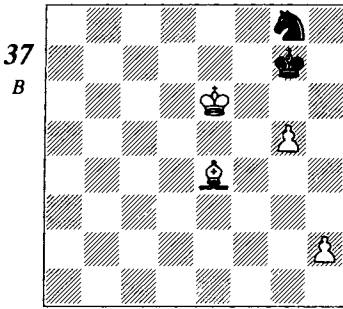
Another pawn race: White had to move his king to unblock the pawn and played 1  $\text{Kb6}$ . What is your opinion of this move and how do you think White fared after it?

36

B

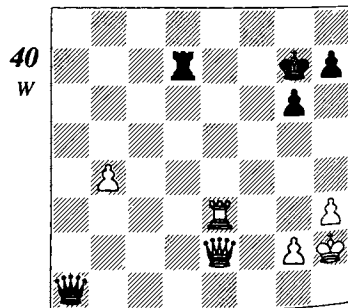
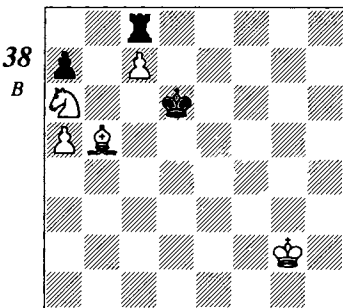


With a rook for two bishops it's clear that Black (to move) is fighting for a draw. Can you see a quick way of making one?



Although White's two connected passed pawns should triumph in the end, he has to be wary of Black sacrificing the knight for the g-pawn and leaving him with bishop + wrong-coloured rook's pawn. Rather than retreat into the corner Black sensibly tried 1...♖h6, which was met by 2 **gxh6+**. 2 h4 would have been a safe alternative but White had calculated 2 **gxh6+** ♔xh6 3 ♕f6 ♕h5 4 ♕g7 and the black king is gradually driven away by a combination of h3 and bringing the bishop round to g4. What had he missed?

In spite of his extra exchange White (to move) is facing some difficult problems: two connected passed pawns aggressively supported by a rook and knight. What is the best way of tackling these and what are White's prospects of survival or victory?



Here Black's position looks even more grim with only a rook against knight, bishop and pawn. Is there any hope for him? (Black to move)

White simplified to a queen ending with 1 ♕e7+. Was this a good decision?

## Solutions

33) **Noquet-Mapelle, Val Maubée 1990**

This type of position is very sensitive: both sides have rook's pawns but neither side's king is anywhere near the queening square, so whoever queens first will have a simple win. Although it is Black to move he still needs another tempo – the game turns out to be a trivial win for White because his queen can occupy a1:

1...♔b5

1...♔b3 looks like a more natural move, at least to move the king nearer a1 – although this wouldn't really make any difference.

2 h4 a5 3 h5 a4 4 h6 a3 5 h7 ♔c4 6 h8 ♚ ♔b3 7 ♚a1 a2 8 ♔f3 ♔a3 9 ♚c3+ ♔a4 10 ♚b2 1-0

34) **Prange-Abramenko, Germany 1993**

1 ♔b6 was a very odd move since it allowed Black to queen with check, but it still just about draws. The game continued:

1...g4 2 a5 g3 3 a6 g2 4 a7 g1 ♚+ 5 ♔b7

Unlike the previous example the defender's king arrives just in time to support the pawn. The black king isn't near enough to generate any mating threats.

5...♚b1+ 6 ♔a8 ♚a2 7 ♔b7 ♚b3+ 8 ♔a8 ♚a4

Black has to take time out to lift the stalemate and because of this he can never approach with his king.

9 ♔b7 ♚b5+

Now Black conceded a draw. Normal first moves would have been

1 ♔b4 or 1 ♔b5, when White would have queened the move after Black and an immediate draw could have been agreed.

35) **Meulders-Kuijff, Sas van Gent 1992**

After 1...♚e8+ 2 ♔b7 ♚e7+ (2...♚d7+ is equally effective) 3 ♔b8 ♔c5 4 a8 ♚ ♔b6 White had managed to queen but it turned out that he couldn't stop mate: **White resigned.**

36) **Skembris-Yurtaev, Moscow OL 1994**

In fact Black has two ways of making an immediate draw. He actually chose 1...♚xb6+ 2 axb6 with a structure where White can't make any progress. The game ended:

2...♔a8 3 ♔e7 ♔b8 4 ♔d7 ♔a8 5 ♔e4 ♔b8 6 ♔f3 ♔a8 7 ♔c6 ♔b8 8 ♔d6 bxc6

8...♔c8 would also have drawn, but 8...♔a8?? 9 ♔c7 would have been an embarrassing end to the game.

9 ♔xc6 ♔a8 10 ♔b5 ♔b8 ½-½

1...♚f3 followed by 2...♚xf5+ would also have drawn as it would leave White with bishop and wrong-coloured rook's pawn. The fact that Black still has a knight's pawn on the board means that White can trap the king in the corner (e.g. black king at a8, white king at c8 and bishop at c5), forcing the b-pawn to move and enabling his own pawn to capture it. Although this would give him a potentially decisive b-pawn, there is no way of arranging this process without stalemating Black.

37) **Chandler-Zsu.Polgar, Brussels 1987**

So many mistakes in chess seem to result because of players assuming that their opponents will make the obvious reply, in this case recapturing the pawn on h6. Unfortunately for White, having two wrong-coloured rook's pawns is just as useless as having one: he had forgotten that after **2 gxh6??** Black could simply play **2...ϕh8!** with a simple **draw**, to which the players agreed after **3 ♠d5 ϕh7 4 ϕf7 ϕh8**.

38) **Gdanski-Schmittziel, Polanica Zdroj 1991**

As in diagram 75 Black can reach a bishop + right-coloured rook's pawn v pawn ending where he manages to force the pawn up to the sixth rank and return his king to the corner in time:

**1...♞xc7! 2 ♜xc7 ϕxc7 3 ϕf3 ϕd6 4 ϕe4 ϕc5 5 ♠e2 ϕb4**

5...a6 followed by 6...ϕb4 would also have drawn.

**6 a6 ϕc5 7 ϕe5 ϕc6**

Now White conceded the **draw**.

39) **Bricard-Blees, Budapest 1990**

White is winning! However, he has to find the correct plan. Black's rook is both supporting his own pawns and preventing the advance of White's. Since I have already pointed out how desirable it is for White to reach a pure rook v knight ending in this kind of position, White's first move, **1 ♞cb1**, hopefully wasn't too difficult to find. After **1...♞xb1+ 2 ♞xb1** the position

suddenly looks rather different – White can battle with king and rook against Black's passed pawns but Black doesn't have anything with which to stop the impending passed a- or b-pawn. It is typical of the knight that it is well placed for operations in one sphere of the board (supporting the passed pawns) but is almost useless for active service in another one (defending against the opposing passed pawn). In fact White won quickly:

**2...d3 3 ϕf2 ♜d5 4 a5 c3 5 ♞a1!**

Now 5...c2, instead of gaining an important tempo on the rook, would allow White to blockade with **ϕe1-d2**.

**5...♜b4 6 a6 bxa6 7 b6!**

The position is still so double-edged that 7 bxa6? would have been a bad mistake allowing 7...♜xa6! 8 ♞xa6? c2 followed by 9...d2 winning.

**7...ϕh7 8 b7 ♜c6**

Now that Black's knight has been forced into passivity it is a simple matter to mop up the once fearsome black pawns.

**9 ϕe3 d2 10 ♜d3 ϕg6 11 ϕxc3 1-0**

Quite apart from the threat to the a6-pawn White can force the win of the knight with **ϕxd2** followed by **♞c1-c8**.

40) **Emms-Hutchinson, British Ch 1991**

I made the point earlier in the chapter that queen endings are a good way of exploiting an extra outside passed pawn as long as the superior side has a well-protected king. In this example, although White has just two pawns covering his king, it

is only vulnerable along the b8-h2 diagonal. The relative exposure of his opponent's king makes White's position even more favourable and it proves surprisingly easy both to escort the pawn and prevent the black queen checking:

1 ♖e7+! ♜xe7 2 ♚xe7+ ♔h6 3 b5 ♚d4

Not the best choice since the game is effectively over once White

can play ♚c7 without having to worry about protecting the b-pawn. For this reason 3...♚b2 was a better alternative but after 4 ♚e3+ and 5 b6 White only needs to transfer his queen to c7 to force a win.

4 ♚c7 ♔g5 5 b6

Now **Black lost on time** but he could equally well have resigned since there is no defence to the pawn's advance.

## 6 Pawnless endings

Once all the pawns have disappeared the superior side needs a substantial material advantage to force a win. Fine claims in *Basic Chess Endings* that at least an extra rook is necessary in order to mate but this assertion has been superseded by computer databases. The might of the silicon chip has caused the reassessment of many pawnless endings and although most of these have had little effect on practical play, I think it is worth explaining the computer method of putting up stubborn defence with rook v queen. I have also devoted a lot of space to rook + bishop v rook because it occurs quite frequently yet is still very badly played, even by strong players. I also felt obliged to include a couple of the basic mates but decided against two bishops v king (occurs very rarely) and two knights v king (there are no realistic winning chances). I toyed briefly with the idea of including king and queen v king, partly because there were so many examples in my database and partly because the players involved were not weak: Kasparov, Kramnik, Korchnoi, Ivanchuk (3 times!) and Larsen (of course these were quick-play games). In the end I compromised and included Karpov playing king + rook v king against Korchnoi. If any readers feel patronized by its inclusion then they should take a look at the complexities of

winning the Philidor position in rook + bishop v rook (diagram 83), which should have the opposite effect.

### Mates against a bare king

#### Rook

Despite the frequent incidence of rook and pawn endings I was surprised to discover that this ending has cropped up much less often in my database than king and queen v king. Perhaps players prefer resigning to being driven around and mated by a mere rook whereas apparently there is no disgrace in being humiliated by a queen. Winning with king and rook v king is fairly straightforward but should the ending arise with both flags about to fall (as in the next example) some accuracy will be required. With this in mind I've come up with a three-stage thought-process:

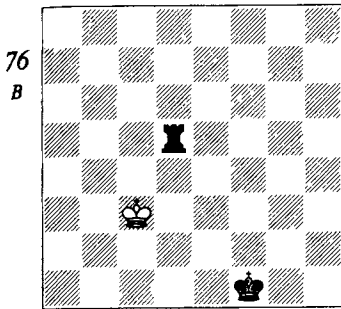
- 1) Approach your opponent's king with your own. If this isn't possible then go to 2.

- 2) Make a move to drive your opponent's king towards the edge of the board. If this isn't possible then go to 3.

- 3) Make a move that will guarantee being able to drive your opponent's king nearer the edge of the board next move.



This might sound an over-complicated way of tackling a simple ending but it is a useful procedure to bear in mind because it also reflects the correct technique for much more difficult endings.



**Korchnoi (2585) – Karpov (2725)**  
*Monaco rapid 1992*  
Black wins

(76) The players had only seconds left but that doesn't mean that their moves are going to be inaccurate: their play stands up well in comparison to the computer-generated database which plays this ending perfectly.

1...♔e2

Black's king first approaches White's.

2 ♖c4 ♜h5

Restricting the opponent's king takes more thought with a rook than with a queen. Karpov's king is already discouraging its opposite number from escaping to the kingside and by cutting it off on the fourth rank he is effectively limiting it to the bottom left segment of the board. After all, of the four edges White's king is already closest to the

a-file so Karpov's decision to force it in that direction is very logical.

3 ♔d4 ♕f3!

Although this doesn't move the black king any closer to White's, it guarantees that White's king will be forced one rank nearer the edge next move and thus complies with the third instruction mentioned above.

4 ♔d3 ♜d5+!

Forcing the king to the c-file.

5 ♕c3 ♔e3

This move and the next represent a standard manoeuvre in king + rook v king. Unfortunately it's not an easy one to explain in words but I'll try anyway. Black's king moves into opposition to the white king, which responds by moving to the side. Then Black's rook transfers to the rank/file adjacent to the white king that will prevent it from moving any further in that direction. As it happens, Black's rook is already on the appropriate rank/file (the fifth rank) so Karpov's next move involves making a waiting move on that same rank. Alternatively, had the black rook been at f1 then he would have played ...♜f5 next move.

6 ♕c4 ♜h5! 7 ♕c3

Moving immediately to the b-file was a feeble alternative, especially as 7 ♕b4 ♔d3 still leaves White with the same problem one file closer to the edge of the board.

7...♜c5+

This check is the point of the whole manoeuvre.

8 ♕b3

8 ♕b4 would have been more accurate but would have still have

reached the same position after 8...♔d4 9 ♖b3 ♔d3.

8...♔d3 9 ♖b4 ♞h5

You should have a strong sense of *déjà vu* here.

10 ♖b3 ♞b5+ 11 ♔a4 ♖c4 12 ♔a3

Now Karpov played the thematic move 12...♖c3, again taking the opposition. After 13 ♔a4 he would have repeated the manoeuvre yet again and forced mate in two with 13...♞h5. However, 13 ♔a2! would have left Black without an obvious way to finish the game off because his rook can't immediately reach the first rank. 13...♖c2 14 ♔a3 doesn't help since Black's rook can't move to the fourth rank and 13...♞b2+ isn't a very good idea – as a general rule, the rook operates more effectively at a distance from the defender's king. The key to this position is that Black's pieces are already beautifully placed and all he has to do is make a waiting move: 13...♞b8! 14 ♔a1 ♖c2 15 ♔a2 ♞a8#. Alas, none of this happened – Karpov's flag fell as he played 12...♖c3 so the game was declared a **draw**.

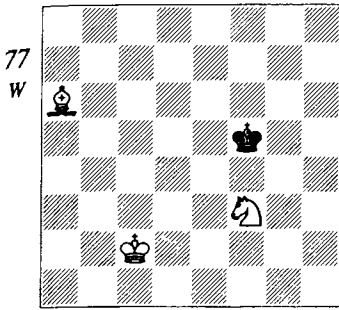
## Two bishops

This ending occurs so rarely (just once in my database of several hundred thousand games) that I don't propose to waste your time by giving an example. The winning process isn't too difficult (if you are unconvinced I should point out that the ending of two bishops v knight is a win, so think of it as a winning position where the defender has made

matters worse by losing a knight). It basically involves driving the defender's king to any edge and then to any corner by gradually depriving it of squares.

## Bishop + knight

By contrast, I think this ending is worth looking at because it crops up fairly frequently and is good for showing off to your friends as long as you really have mastered it. Having consulted my own records I discovered that I've reached it three times in my life, at the ages of 8, 13 and 28 and always on the wrong side. Bizarrely, I lost the first two and then drew last year against a German with IM norms and half an hour on the clock. In fact, consulting a large database reveals that many players who should have known better have either failed to win it or have come perilously close to exceeding the fifty-move rule. The ending is a win but even with perfect play it can take up to 33 moves if the superior side's pieces start off badly placed. If the defender is struggling with, e.g., rook v bishop + knight and pawn, then it's a good idea for him to give up the rook as soon as possible whilst his opponent's pieces are still uncoordinated. Otherwise the advance of the pawn will leave him compelled to give up the rook anyway in much less favourable circumstances. In the following example Black has wisely just given up his knight for a pawn at c2 – otherwise he would have risked not even being able to reach bishop + knight v bare king.



**Enders (2480) – Muir (2340)**  
*Budapest 1995*  
White wins

(77) White's pieces are fairly well placed but then so is Black's king: the first step is to drive it into the corner. In this case the *only* corners where mate can be forced are a8 and h1 – i.e. the ones that can be attacked by White's bishop. Although Black can't do anything about his king being forced back he can at least pick his corner. If he has any sense then he will head for a corner where mate can't be forced. This will then leave White with the tricky task of driving the black king along the edge of the board without letting it escape. I should also point out that at every stage of the ending the knight is most effectively placed on the same coloured squares as the bishop. This is particularly apparent in this example, where the knight's moments of glory occur at f3, f7, d7 and, finally, a6 where it helps to deliver mate. This is because a knight complements a light-squared bishop's efforts from a light square: only then can it control dark squares. Having the knight on a dark square would be all very well if

the two minor pieces were trying to pile up on a pawn at f7, but in this ending there is no reason ever to attack a square more than once.

**Phase 1: Driving the black king into the corner**

It is difficult to give specific guidance about this phase but it is noticeable that the knight is so well placed at f3 that White doesn't even move it for the first 15 moves – this is typical of the process of driving back the opposing king if carried out accurately.

1 ♖d3 ♜f4 2 ♠b7 ♜f5 3 ♠e4+ ♜f6 4 ♖d4

Enders has centralized and co-ordinated his pieces – between them the bishop and knight are controlling e5, f5, g5 and g6 so now he brings his king around to cover e6 and force the black king to retreat.

4...♜e6 5 ♜c5 ♜e7 6 ♠f5

A finesse that switches the bishop's diagonal and enables White to play ♠e6 at a suitable moment, thereby forcing the black king even further back.

6...♜f6 7 ♠g4 ♜e7 8 ♖d5 ♜f6 9 ♠e6 ♜g7 10 ♖d6 ♜f6 11 ♖d7

Around here White isn't always playing the most accurate moves but I do like the way he is completing phase 1 with just king + bishop. Incidentally at the time the game was played, Enders was the German champion so you can have faith in the strength of his moves.

11...♜g7 12 ♜e7 ♜g6 13 ♠d7 ♜g7 14 ♠e8 ♜h7 15 ♜f6 ♜h6 16 ♜e5 ♜h7

The basic position for which White has to aim before starting on the next phase is the one shown in the next diagram – it does have to be memorized but is fairly easy to reach.

17 ♖g6+ ♔h8

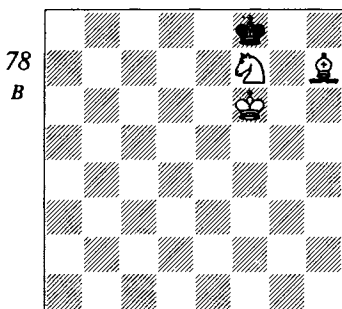
After 17...♔g8 18 ♘f7 ♕f8 19 ♖h7 White would reach his target position a move quicker.

18 ♘f7+ ♔g8 19 ♖b1

Any other retreat along this diagonal would have done just as well.

19...♕f8 20 ♖h7! (78)

The start of the process to drive the black king along the eighth rank to a8.



### Enders – Muir

*Budapest 1995*

Black to play. White wins in at most 17 more moves as long as he knows that he should be trying to play ♘f7-e5-d7 as quickly as possible.

### Phase 2: Driving the black king along the edge into the right corner

The diagram shows a key position for which White has to aim – obviously it can also be rotated around

the board through 90 degrees with Black's king at h6 and White's knight and bishop at g6 and g8 respectively. One way of remembering this structure is to imagine it as a 'T' shape (and if you mix up the positions of bishop and knight then don't worry because it means you will have mated Black). The next stage looks rather odd since it apparently involves letting the black king escape. It's usually where players who haven't bothered to learn the winning process go wrong. And yet it isn't really that difficult – the key to memorizing it is to remember that the black king has to be driven away permanently from f8. Because this is a dark square it means that a knight has to do the job from a light square. Light squares on the seventh rank are important in this ending and having already used h7 and f7 in the diagram above, White needs to switch his knight as quickly as possible to d7. This explains his next move.

20...♕e8 21 ♘e5 ♕d8

This was a major decision point for Black. Usually by this stage in the ending he would have a sense of how confident White is of finding the winning method: if there has been any sign of hesitation then 21...♕d8 would certainly be the move to play since it requires most accuracy on White's part. The alternative 21...♕f8 just gives White more time to organize himself: one simple way of forcing the black king into the a8 corner is to repeat the 'T' shape two files to the left so that after transferring the knight to d7 he plays ♘d7-c5-b7. After 21...♕f8 22 ♘d7+

♖e8 23 ♖e6 ♗d8 24 ♗d6 ♖e8 (24...♗c8 25 ♘c5 ♗d8 26 ♙g6 ♗c8 27 ♙f7 ♗d8 28 ♘b7+, etc.) 25 ♙g6+ ♗d8 26 ♙f7 ♗c8 27 ♘c5 White is duplicating the manoeuvre he plays in the game except in even more favourable circumstances, i.e. two files to the left.

22 ♖e6!

I suggested bringing the knight to d7 as fast as possible as a mnemonic for the winning procedure and I hope it's obvious that the alternative way of achieving this, 22 ♙f5, is a clumsy idea. Black's king would escape after 22...♗c7 23 ♘d7 ♗c6 and 24...♗b5.

22...♗c7

This is the part which requires strong nerves since carrying on with the ♘e5-d7 plan appears to allow the black king to escape.

23 ♘d7! ♗c6

In fact all White has to do to keep the black king hemmed in is cover the b5-square: this turns out to be straightforward.

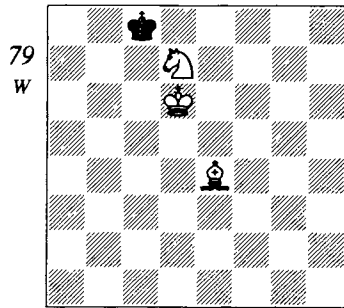
24 ♙d3! ♗c7 25 ♙e4

It is important to control c6 and force Black's king even further back. 25 ♙b5 is also possible but it's more logical to put the bishop on the diagonal where it is going to deliver mate.

25...♗d8 26 ♗d6

White has consolidated the position of his d7-knight and reached a position similar to the previous diagram except that the pieces are two files to the left. Now 26...♖e8 27 ♙g6+ ♗d8 28 ♙f7 ♗c8 29 ♘c5 would transpose to a variation that I gave above.

26...♗c8 (79)



### Enders – Muir

Budapest 1995

White, to play, mates in 8.

### Phase 3: Delivering mate

This part is not completely trivial. Even when the black king is cooped up in a light-squared corner it usually requires some thought to finish things off. The set-up to aim for from the above diagram is usually ♗b6 and ♘c5 with the bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal preventing Black's king from escaping via c8. If necessary White will make a waiting move followed by ♘a6+ and ♙# on the long diagonal. It is vital not to let the king escape since that could mean going back to phase 1 and, even with perfect play, not being able to mate within the 50-move rule. Enders actually found a very direct way to reach this mating set-up:

27 ♘c5! ♗d8

After 27...♗b8 28 ♙f5 White would quickly reach b6 with his king and deliver mate.

28 ♙c6!

28 ♙g6 was the other way of covering e8 but would leave White with work to do to force the king to b8.

Enders's move takes advantage of a tactical point.

28...♖c8 29 ♔d7+!

Now White has Black's king exactly where he wants it as 29...♗d8 unexpectedly allows mate in one.

29...♗b8

White's minor pieces are where they need to be – all that remains is for him to reach b6 with his king.

30 ♖c6 ♗a7 31 ♖c7 ♗a8 32 ♗b6 ♗b8 33 ♔a6+ ♗a8 34 ♔c6#

I feel I should add some words of advice to the defender: playing quickly does put a lot of extra pressure on an opponent, especially if there is a quick-play finish. After all, the defence really isn't difficult, there's nothing to lose and the only important guideline to remember is retreating to a corner not controlled by the bishop.

## Queen v rook

I spent days studying the computer-generated database of this ending a few years ago but until now I haven't had the chance to put my knowledge to any practical use. The ending is a theoretical win for the queen in an absolute maximum of 31 moves (assuming perfect play on both sides). In practice results have been overwhelmingly one-sided. Along with many, many victories for the queen I've only come across one game where the side with the rook held out for 50 moves to draw. However, John Nunn's book, *Secrets of Pawnless Endings* points out that defenders should have been making life much harder for their opponents. It has

been known for nearly 20 years (i.e. since computers have had the capacity to generate complete databases of four-man endings) that the so-called 'third-rank defence' is particularly difficult for an unprepared human to break down, yet some of the strongest players in the world have defended the ending without making full use of this formation. Before going on to explain what it involves, I'd like to give some general guidelines for the superior side in this ending:

1) Activate your king and then try to drive your opponent's back to the edge. This should involve your king following your opponent's for most of the journey.

2) Forcing the defender's king to the edge is rarely decisive in itself. Usually it needs to be driven into the corner as well in order to force zugzwang. Then the rook will have to desert its colleague and should fall soon afterwards to a fork.

3) Queen placement:

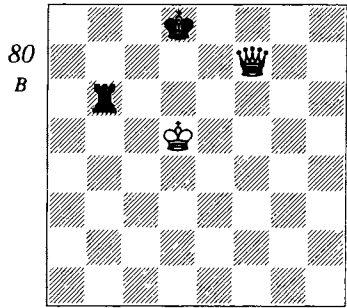
3a) It should prevent any rook checks driving the king away from the defender's king.

3b) The queen is often well posted some distance from the opposing king. This is particularly important when the unfortunate king has already been driven to the edge of the board since otherwise the defender can generate annoying stalemate tricks. Imagine a position where Black's king is on c8 and his rook is defensively placed at d7. Then b6 would be a bad square for the queen. As his king is already short of moves Black would need only to give up his rook on a square adjacent to d7 to

force a stalemate. Suppose White's king were on f5 – then 1...♖f7+ would be a good start because Black could answer the obvious 2 ♔e6 with 2...♗e7+. My database informs me that with perfect play by both sides White would still need another 18 moves to win from this position and he would also need to avoid the appalling 3 ♔d6?? ♗e6+!, forcing an immediate draw. Now if we reverse the positions of the white pieces, with the king correctly placed near its opposite number at b6 and the queen hovering discreetly at f5, then the contrast is marked. White wins immediately with or without the move (1 ♔c6 wins the rook whilst 1...♔d8 2 ♗f8 is mate).

3c) When playing around with the database I've been surprised by how frequently a simple transfer of the queen to one of the four central squares is the strongest move (see move 6 in the main line below). It may not threaten very much but if you recall guideline '3b' then it shouldn't be surprising that a quick collapse of Black's defensive structure can be brought about by a calm positional move.

(80) Setting up this kind of position is the only way that Black can put practical difficulties in the way of his opponent. If White doesn't come up with anything special then he can simply shuffle his rook up and down the third rank and give the occasional check at appropriate times. Keeping his pieces on active squares for as long as possible is a good way for Black to use up some of his opponent's fifty-move ration, but he



The 'third-rank defence' first discovered by Ken Thompson's program BELLE in 1978 – White wins but if it's his move then he really needs to know the 1 ♗f4! ♔d7 2 ♗a4+! idea.

should ensure that he can still bail out to a position (or its equivalent in some other part of the board) with his king on d8/e8 and his rook on the sixth rank cutting off the white king. White's problem in trying to break down this defence is that the third rank, like most of the ranks and files on a chessboard, has eight squares on it. It is very hard to keep them all covered and force the rook away. His task is much simpler if Black is to move in the diagram: 1...♗a6 (1...♔c8 2 ♗e7 doesn't help) 2 ♔c5 ♔c8 (2...♗a3 is well met by 3 ♔b6! leaving Black's rook out on a limb) 3 ♗e7 ♔b8 4 ♔b5 and Black has been squeezed out of squares and has to play the dismal 4...♗a7 to avoid losing immediately. However, White, to move, finds it remarkably hard to lose a tempo: 1 ♔c5 ♗a6 2 ♔b5 ♗d6 achieves nothing whilst 1 ♗g7 ♔e8 2 ♗c7 ♗f6 3 ♔e5 ♗g6 is basically the same as the diagram position with it

still being White's move. Instead the unlikely **1 ♖f4!** is the key to cracking Black's structure. If you bear in mind point '3b' above then you might not find the move completely unexpected but very few players would be capable of finding the idea over the board. Black's rook still doesn't have any good squares along the third rank so he should try...

**1...♗d7**

**1...♗c8 2 ♗c5 ♖a6 (2...♞e6 3 ♖f5 ♗d7 4 ♗d5)** leaves Black's third-rank defence in ruins especially after the accurate move **3 ♖e4!** (see '3c' above). Now...

**2 ♖a4+!**

...is the only good follow-up. 'So what?' you are probably wondering. Black's immediate problem is that returning to d8 allows **3 ♖a5 ♗c7 4 ♗c5** whereas **2...♗c8 3 ♗c5** destroys what is left of the third-rank defence. That leaves...

**2...♗c7 3 ♖a7+**

This forces the rook off the third rank.

**3...♞b7 4 ♖c5+**

Now the king is forced back as well.

**4...♗b8**

White's king can now approach as his queen is sufficiently far away to avoid any stalemate chances.

**5 ♗d6**

**5 ♗c6?? ♞c7+** would be less convincing.

**5...♞h7**

Having to move his rook away is a sign that Black's position is starting to collapse. He needs to maintain the possibility of **...♞c7+** in answer to **♗c6** and **5...♞a7** would allow White

to reach the Philidor position (see next diagram) with **6 ♖b6+ ♞b7 7 ♖d8+ ♗a7 8 ♗c6**. After **5...♞h7** White can't actually improve the position of his king so it's worth consulting the guidelines in '3' above to see where he should be moving his queen. A database will confirm that there are several equally good moves for White here – **♖g5, ♖e5, ♖d5, ♖e3**, etc., all of which either centralize the queen, distance it from the black king or prevent the rook checking. The centralizing...

**6 ♖d4**

...is the most accurate move, however. It threatens the approach of White's king with **7 ♗c6 ♞c7+ 8 ♗b6 ♞b7+ 9 ♗a6** because it keeps the a7-square covered but also attacks h8 in order to reply to **6...♞h6+** with **7 ♗d7 ♞h7+ 8 ♗d8**. In both cases the fact that White's king is so close to its opposite number and can't be driven away spells disaster for Black.

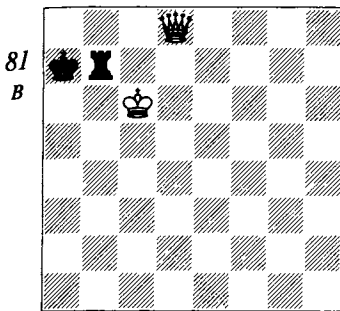
**6...♞c7**

The only way to prevent **7 ♗c6** that doesn't lose immediately. Now White has the chance to force the Philidor position:

**7 ♖b6+ ♞b7 8 ♖d8+ ♗a7 9 ♗c6 (81)**

I hope it is obvious why White's position is so favourable: Black's king has been pushed into the corner and his third-rank defence has turned into a feeble second-rank defence. White's king is dangerously near his opposite number whilst his queen is near enough to stop any checks but not so close as to give Black stalemate chances. White's pieces are





**Analysis by Philidor, 1777**

Black to play is in immediate zugzwang: White wins in a maximum of 5 moves. With White to play, the quickest win is to give Black the move with 1 ♖d4+ ♙a8 2 ♜a1+ ♚b8 3 ♜a5.

perfectly placed which is why it helps that Black is to move.

9...♜h7

Again there is no way for the rook to stay close to the king but this time the division of Black's army proves fatal.

10 ♖d4+

White needs to arrange a check on a1 in order to meet ...♙b8 by ♜b1+. 10 ♜a5+ ♙b8 11 ♜e5+ comes to the same thing.

10...♙b8 11 ♜e5+ ♙a7 12 ♜a1+ ♙b8 13 ♜b1+

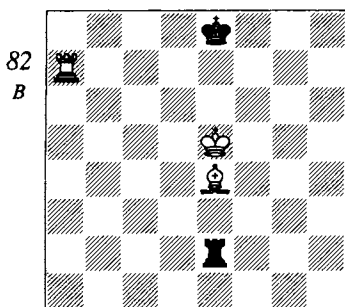
The rook drops off next move.

**Rook + bishop v rook**

*Secrets of Pawnless Endings* deals with this ending in detail and points out how frequently it arises. Defenders tend to aim for it because it is theoretically drawn whilst their opponents know that there are winning

chances in practice and are happy to collude. My feeling is that the ending tends to be reached in quick-play finishes nowadays and that this stacks the odds overwhelmingly in favour of the side with the bishop. I have watched a few unfortunates trying to defend with a few minutes left on the clock but no one that I have seen has managed it. I even saw Keith Arkell, described in Nunn's book as "a specialist in ♜+♙ v ♜", fail to hold it in a quick-play finish. Unfortunately for the defender, starting off with a couple of pawns may not help because they don't tend to last very long. The exception to this would be some really solid formation with, say, pawns on f7 and g6 and the king at g7 but isolated pawns tend to be too weak to survive. My basic advice to the defender is to avoid this ending but just to show you that a successful defence is possible here is a practical example that ended in a draw:

(82) Black has already managed to use up 12 moves of White's ration of 50 in reaching this position. Regardless of how favourably the defender's pieces are placed at the start of the ending, his king can always be forced back to the edge. Then some accuracy is required to avoid catastrophe. Here his king has been forced on to the back rank so he has activated his rook in order to tie down both White's king and bishop. This position is known as the 'Cochrane defence' and according to Nunn is favoured by top-level grandmasters over the alternative method of defence, the so-called 'second-rank

**Budnikov (2525) – Novik (2405)***Moscow Ch 1991*

Despite the fact that Black's king is cut off on the back rank, the position is a draw because White's king is still only on the fifth rank and Black's rook is preventing it from advancing any further.

defence'. This involves a more passive position for the defender's rook and isn't considered here. Black's subsequent play is a fine example of the simplicity and power of the Cochrane defence – he sets it up twice more in the remainder of the game. The key ideas that Black observes in the subsequent play are (in approximate chronological order):

1) To wait with ...♞e2-e1-e2 if White keeps his rook on the seventh (moves 1, 19 and 36). It is vital to keep the rook on the e-file to prevent White's king reaching the sixth rank.

2) To answer ♔d5 with ...♕f8 and ♕f5 with ...♔d8, i.e. to send his king in the opposite direction to White's (moves 2, 20 and 37). Many games have been unnecessarily lost because defenders weren't aware of this simple idea.

3) To drive the white rook away from the seventh (or on the second occasion that Black sets up the Cochrane position, from the g-file) as soon as he has the chance (moves 3, 21 and 38). After all, White's trumps in the Cochrane position are the active position of his rook and the poor position of the black king.

4) To move the king as far away from the back rank as possible – the closer it is to the centre of the board, the safer it is (moves 4, 5, 18, 22, 23 and 34). It is especially badly placed in the corner so 23...♕g7-f6 is a very important defensive move.

5) Once Black's king has escaped he can use up more moves of White's ration of 50 by holding off White's king for a few moves from the side (moves 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12).

6) When it looks as though the white king is returning to the fifth rank (or its equivalent) Black should switch his rook round to the rear and head for the Cochrane position again (moves 13, 14, 25, 29, 32). This is a phase which requires good judgement since waiting too long can allow White's king to infiltrate too far and reach the sixth rank with disastrous consequences.

This game isn't the most glamorous example in the book, I'm afraid, but it would have saved a lot of players a lot of half points had they been familiar with it.

1...♞e1 2 ♔d5

Nunn points out that 2 ♞a4 threatens the decisive 3 ♕e6 but also indicates 2...♕e7 as the obvious defence for Black.

2...♕f8! 3 ♕f5 ♞e7!

It might look odd for White to allow this but to make progress he has to move both king and bishop.

4 ♖a8+ ♜f7 5 ♖a1 ♜f6 6 ♙c8 ♞e5+ 7 ♜d6 ♞e2 8 ♞f1+ ♜g5

Essentially White's situation has deteriorated since the Cochrane position shown in the diagram. His bishop is offside whilst his king is less active and still has to find a way on to the e-file. Moreover, Black's king is better placed and eight more precious moves have been used up.

9 ♙b7 ♞e3 10 ♜d5 ♞e2 11 ♜d4

White's last three moves were intended to prepare ♙e4 followed by ♜e5 but Black's anticipation is good and he switches the rook to the other side of the king to prevent this.

11...♞e7 12 ♙d5 ♞e8 13 ♞f7 ♞b8

White wasn't actually threatening very much but in any case Novik decides to switch back to the Cochrane defence (rotated through 90 degrees).

14 ♜e5 ♞b5 15 ♞f1 ♖a5 16 ♞g1+ ♜h5 17 ♞h1+ ♜g5 18 ♞b1

This doesn't achieve or threaten anything but you have to try something in such situations even if your opponent seems to know what he's doing.

18...♜h5 19 ♞g1 ♞b5 20 ♜d4 ♜h6! 21 ♙e4 ♞g5! 22 ♞f1 ♜g7 23 ♙f5 ♜f6

One good thing about only having two pieces left is not having to worry much about discovered checks.

24 ♜e4 ♜e7 25 ♞d1 ♞g2!

By now Budnikov must have known for sure that he wasn't going to win – Black is heading for the Cochrane defence again and only has to survive for another 12 moves.

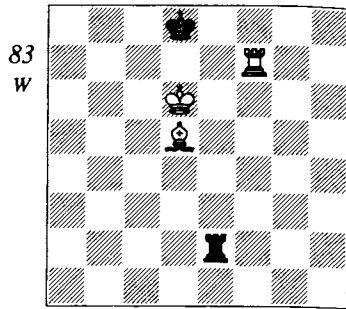
26 ♞d7+ ♜f6 27 ♞d6+ ♜e7 28 ♞e6+ ♜f7 29 ♖a6 ♞e2+ 30 ♜d5 ♜e7 31 ♙e4 ♞d2+ 32 ♜e5 ♞e2 33 ♞e6+ ♜d7 34 ♞h6 ♜e7 35 ♞h7+ ♜e8 36 ♖a7 ♞e1 37 ♜d5 ♜f8! 38 ♙f5 ♞e7!

And because the ending had already been going 12 moves before we joined it, White realized that he was about to face a claim under the fifty-move rule and conceded a draw. Still, I approve of the way that he played out the ending for as long as possible – some games that I came across saw the superior side quickly lose heart and accept a draw after only a few moves.

That might have looked fairly easy but if you're tired and short of time then, believe me, it isn't. Fatigue and the constant pressure on the defender often lead to fatal blunders even if the side with the bishop is unfamiliar with the winning procedure. I quote from the annotations of an English grandmaster currently ranked amongst the world's top 100 players who was struggling to push home his advantage in a winning rook + bishop v rook position: "I'm not too sure of the theory of this ending, in case you hadn't already guessed." Despite his ignorance he still went on to win the game. To give you an idea of the accuracy with which Black has to defend, imagine that Novik had begun diagram 82 with the plausible 1...♜d8? instead of the correct 1...♞e1. In these positions White can feel confident if he can establish his king on the sixth rank and White is indeed winning after 2 ♜d6!, intending to answer 2...♞xe4 with 3 ♖a8#. Black actually

stumbled into this position in a game Gellrich-Lutz, Germany 1988 but then found the only moves to keep the game going: 2...♔e8 (giving himself a flight square at f7) 3 ♖d5! (sheltering the white king from checks and again threatening mate in one) 3...♔f8 (now that White's king has reached the majestic square d6 he should be trying to force the black king back to d8 and reach the type of position shown in the next diagram). Unfortunately White didn't know this and played 4 ♞h7? ♞f2! 5 ♙e4 ♞f6+ 6 ♔e5 ♞f7 after which he rather feebly accepted a **draw**. Instead, after 4 ♞f7+! ♔e8 (4...♔g8 allows a discovered check picking up the black rook) 5 ♞f1 (making sure that the black king doesn't return to the f-file and threatening to mate with 6 ♙c6+ and 7 ♞f8) 5...♔d8 (to give you an idea of why these positions are so difficult for Black to defend, 5...♞d2 would lose immediately to 6 ♞a1 ♔f8 7 ♞g1). Now White has achieved his aim of forcing Black's king back to d8. To prevent it from returning to e8 and to bring his rook to an active square with gain of tempo, he carries out another little manoeuvre: 6 ♞f8+ ♞e8 7 ♞f7! ♞e2 reaching the next diagram (83).

Many games have reached this kind of position and though the side with the bishop always seems to win, the games are rarely models of logic. So rather than giving a practical example I have chosen to present the main ideas for White along with some analysis by Philidor which has stood the tests of time and computers. White's pieces are on dream squares



### analysis by Philidor, 1749

White wins because his king has reached the sixth rank whereas Black's king is on its worst possible square, directly opposite it.

whereas Black has to defend against so many different mating ideas that his overworked rook simply cannot cope. In practical terms it is also easy for White to manoeuvre around and test out Black's reactions without fear of letting the king escape.

At the moment White is only being prevented from mating on the back rank by the interposition of Black's rook: ♞f8+ can be answered by ...♞e8 whilst ♞a7 and ♞a8+ is met by ...♞c1 and ...♞c8. He could make a crude attempt to prevent this with ♙e6/♙c6 but then his king would be exposed to checks on the d-file. So instead Philidor hit upon a much more effective set-up which would both cut off the black rook from the defence and prevent it checking. After all, White's king is so beautifully placed that it would be a shame if it had to move in response to a check. If the black rook could be enticed to e3 with White's rook at f4 then ♙e4 would be a winning move

since it threatens mate in one. The only defence that doesn't give up the rook would be ...♙e8 but then ♖c6+ ♗d8; ♜f8 mates.

To reach this set-up Philidor came up with a five-stage winning plan. The key to executing it successfully is to remember that White's rook always has to be on the f-file before he can move on to the next stage:

1) Use zugzwang to force the black rook to the inferior square e1.

2) Play ♖f3 and use zugzwang to force it to e3 (because this will be the only free square on the e-file).

3) Once the rook has been forced to the unfavourable third rank the bishop can return to d5 with tempo (i.e. in a position where there is a threat of mate so that Black has no time to return his rook to the second rank).

4) Then White arranges to play ♜f4 with tempo (i.e. mate will be threatened).

5) Black will have to deal with the mate threat and White can follow up with the decisive ♖e4.

If you know that White is trying to reach a position with his rook on f4, his bishop at e4 and Black's rook at e3 then this plan should make sense. The tricky part is carrying out stages 3 and 4 without undoing the progress made in stages 1 and 2. White can only return the bishop to d5 and play ♜f4 with tempo by first disrupting Black's structure. Carrying this out involves using other ideas – switching the rook from kingside to queenside (moves 2, 3 and 8), flicking in checks from the front (moves 7 and 9) and a crude mate threat with the

bishop to return it to d5 with tempo (moves 5 and 6).

**1 ♜h7**

Black's rook is best placed on the second rank so this is simply a waiting move to drive it to a less favourable rank and thereby force through the first stage of the plan.

**1...♜e1**

Going to e3 would be even more of a concession.

**2 ♜a7**

Before moving on to the second stage, White has to arrange for his rook to return to f7 with tempo. This means decoying the black rook away from the e-file first.

**2...♜c1 3 ♜f7 ♜e1**

White has returned to the diagram position except with the black rook on a less favourable square. He can now proceed with stage 2.

**4 ♖f3 ♜e3**

Although this move falls in with White's plan, at least it carries a threat of 5...♜d3+. After 4...♙e8 5 ♜f4 Black has no checks and is at White's mercy: 5...♗d8 6 ♜a4 ♜c1 7 ♖g4! ♙e8 8 ♖e6 ♜d1+ 9 ♖d5 ♗f8 10 ♜g4 and Black can only prevent mate by giving up his rook.

**5 ♖c6!**

The bishop needs to return to d5 to complete stage 3 but the immediate 5 ♖d5 would waste all White's hard work: 5...♜e2 would transpose back to the starting diagram.

**5...♜d3+ 6 ♖d5 ♜e3**

The threat of mate means that Black has no time to move his rook back to the second rank. Now White moves on to stage 4 – arranging to play ♜f4 with tempo.

7 ♖d7+ ♔e8

7...♗c8 8 ♖a7 wins immediately due to the unfortunate position of Black's rook (8...♞b3 loses the rook).

8 ♖a7 ♗f8 9 ♞f7+ ♔e8 10 ♞f4!

White's four-move manoeuvre has decoyed the king to e8 and represents the completion of stage 4 – because of the threat of 11 ♕c6+ Black still has no time to improve the position of his rook.

10...♗d8

After 10...♞d3 11 ♞g4 Black's rook can no longer reach the f-file.

11 ♕e4

Reaching the formation that White was aiming for. I should point out that a mirror image of this whole process is also possible on the queenside. Then the winning set-up would involve White manoeuvring his rook to b4 and his bishop to c4 while enticing the black rook to c3. Now **White mates** in three after 11...♗e8 12 ♕c6+ ♗d8 13 ♞f8+ ♖e8 14 ♞xe8#.

If that seemed difficult, then remember that in practice the defender usually blunders into a mate long before move 14!

## Rook + knight v rook

I was going to dismiss this ending by saying that it crops up much less frequently than rook and bishop v rook and always ends in a draw anyway (I found only two decisive games in my entire database and in one of these the defender started off in a lost position). Then Kasparov decided to throw a spanner in the works by winning the ending against Judit Polgar

so I had to take a closer look. If the defender's king is well placed then by keeping his rook active he should be able to avoid being driven to the edge. Even if he is forced to the edge then he shouldn't have too many problems – I found a game Seirawan-Hübner where the German grandmaster drew easily by heading for a Cochrane position except White had a knight rather than a bishop. However, real problems arise if the defender's king is forced into the corner – Ms Polgar ended up in this situation after missing a chance to relieve the pressure through a stalemate trick (see exercises at the end of this chapter). To summarize: it's definitely an ending worth playing on, but unless an opponent is very short of time or has a badly placed king it's not worth hoping for too much.

## Rook v knight

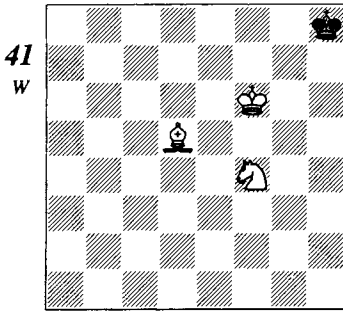
This ending is very similar in practical terms to rook + knight v rook. Basically as long as the defender's king stays in the centre he has nothing to worry about. In both cases life becomes more dangerous if the king is forced to the edge, and allowing it to be driven into the corner is usually fatal. It really is vital that the defender's king and knight stay together since otherwise they present two separate and vulnerable targets. A king and rook alliance is quite capable of trapping and winning a stray knight whereas it shouldn't make any progress at all against a centralized king and knight partnership.

## Rook v bishop

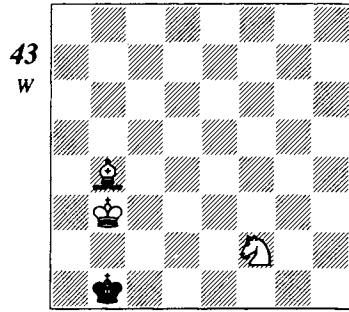
Again Black is completely safe if he stays in the centre. Fine claims in *Basic Chess Endings* that “it is always possible to force the king to the side of the board by successively pinning the bishop”. However, it would be surprising if king and bishop were so much easier to push around than king and knight. In fact Black’s king should be able to maintain a central position. Fine’s comment only applies if the bishop allows itself to be successively pinned. In any case Black has a second lifeline in this ending because his king can head for one of the two ‘safe’ corners, i.e. those not covered by the bishop. Facing a king on h8 and a light-squared bishop, White can always put his king on g6/h6 and check on the back rank. However, then he has to make a

move that worsens his position in order to lift the stalemate. The only conceivable way for a reasonable player to lose this kind of position is to move the bishop to the fatal square e6 with White’s king on g6 and his rook on the seventh rank. Then ♖h7+ ♔g8; ♜e7 threatens mate and the bishop. However, any other sensible square on the a2-g8 diagonal (including g8) holds comfortably as there will be a saving check on the long diagonal. Although about a third of rook v bishop endings on my database ended decisively this is because many rook + rook’s pawn v bishop positions can only be won by sacrificing the pawn and exploiting the unfortunate position of the defender’s king in an ‘unsafe’ corner. Otherwise the positions should be harmless for the defender even if he is under pressure on the clock.

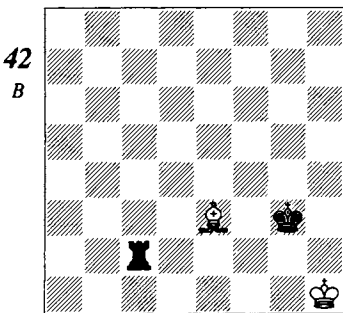
## Exercises



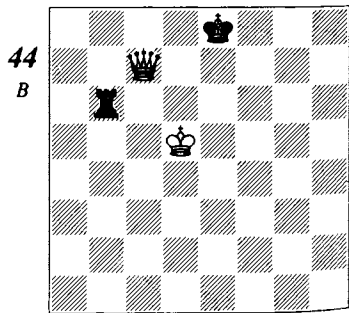
White has a highly rated grand-master at his mercy but alas he hasn't studied his basic endings. The game continued: 1  $\text{Ng6+}$   $\text{Kh7}$  2  $\text{Re6}$   $\text{Kh6}$  3  $\text{Rg8}$   $\text{Kh5}$  4  $\text{Re5}$   $\text{Kh4}$  5  $\text{Nd3}$   $\text{Kg4}$  6  $\text{Rd5}$   $\text{Kh5}$  7  $\text{Re4}$   $\text{Kh6}$  8  $\text{Nc5}$   $\text{Kh5}$  9  $\text{Re6}$   $\text{Kh6}$  10  $\text{Rd3}$   $\text{Kh5}$  and the game meandered on until Black claimed his draw 30 moves later. Where did White deviate from the correct winning procedure in this sequence?



White (to move) is rated 2530 and has managed to force her opponent's king into the right corner. However, she hasn't played the ending optimally and only has eight more moves to mate before her opponent can claim a draw on the grounds of the fifty-move rule. She managed to mate in six moves although in fact two mates in four are possible. What is the best that you can find?

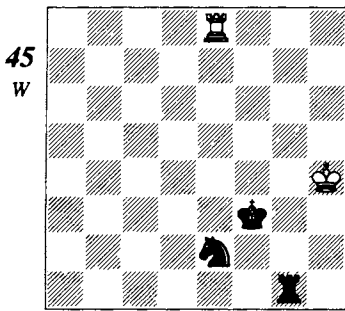


How would you assess this ending? It is Black to move.

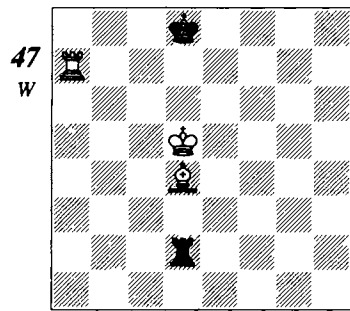


Black (to move) has sensibly gone for third-rank defence but White is beginning to pressurize him. Where would you put the attacked rook?

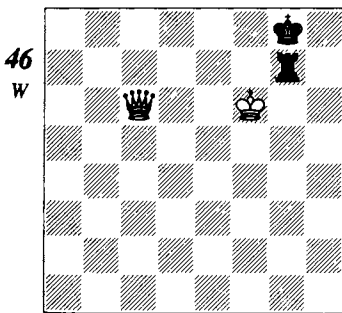




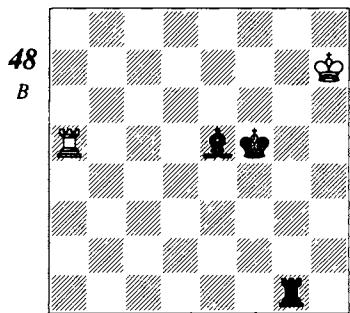
In spite of having reached this drawn ending, White is under some pressure. She played 1 ♖h5 but after 1... ♜g3+ 2 ♖h6 ♜f5+ 3 ♖h7 her position had deteriorated and her king later came to a sticky end in the corner. However, there was a spectacular defensive manoeuvre that would have made life much easier – can you find it?



How would you rate White's winning chances here? The game continued 1 ♖c5 ♜d1 2 ♜f6+ ♖e8 3 ♖c6 ♜c1+ 4 ♖d6 ♜d1+ 5 ♖e6 ♜e1+ 6 ♜e5. White's position has clearly improved – can you pinpoint any mistakes by Black and would you say his cause is now lost?



This position follows on from exercise 44: Black's third rank defence has collapsed and White's king and queen are closing in for the kill. How should White (to play) finish the game off?



Black has managed to reach a situation similar to the Philidor position except that the defender's king is on a worse square. This makes the win easier although it does still take some finding. Black (to move) has a forcing six-move sequence that wins the white rook. Can you find it?

## Solutions

41) **Lengyel-Loginov, Budapest 1993**

The appalling 5 ♖d3? was the culprit – up to then White's play had been a model of accuracy. Instead 5 ♖f5 ♖g3 6 ♗g4 ♖f3 7 ♙c4, etc., would have notched up the GM scalp.

42) **Andrade-Solomon, U16 Wch 1995**

In principle the ending of rook v bishop is a straightforward draw, particularly if the defender's king is in the centre. Here White has moved it to a corner which is the opposite colour to his bishop and this should also be a simple draw. As long as he keeps his bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal and moves his king to h1 whenever possible he shouldn't run into any trouble. However, it is important to keep open the option of a bishop check. This means avoiding the e3-square: d4, b6 and a7 would have all been good alternatives to 1 ♙e3?? but in the diagram Black won immediately after 1...♙h2+ 2 ♖g1 ♙e2 and because White didn't have a check on the b8-h2 diagonal he found himself unable to cover both bishop and mate. So he resigned (0-1).

43) **P.Cramling-Gallagher, Bern 1992**

White came up with 1 ♙d2 ♖a1 2 ♗e4 ♖b1 3 ♗d6 ♖a1 4 ♗c4 ♖b1 5 ♗a3+ ♖a1 6 ♙c3# but this involved the knight taking a circuitous route. Instead both 1 ♗d3 ♖a1 2 ♖c2 ♖a2 3 ♗c1+ ♖a1 4 ♙c3# and 1 ♙a3 ♖a1

2 ♗e4 (2 ♗d1) 2...♖b1 3 ♗c3+ (3 ♗d2+) 3...♖a1 4 ♙b2# would have been quicker.

44) **Salov-Short, Barcelona 1989**

Clearly Black should maintain his third-rank defence for as long as possible and since 1...♙a6 loses immediately to 2 ♖c8+ he has to decide between f6, g6 and h6. White will probably play 2 ♖e5 regardless to set up his optimum position (i.e. king opposite Black's king, queen on the most active seventh-rank square available) and Black in turn needs to reply so as to set up his optimum position (i.e. rook on the most active third-rank square available). In practice what this means is that he should find a square which enables him to reach g6 on the following move, i.e. 1...♙f6! or 1...♙h6!. Then after 2 ♖e5 ♙g6 White will need to find the key manoeuvre 3 ♖c4! ♖e7 4 ♖h4+! to make progress. However, in the game Black played 1...♙g6?! and after 2 ♖e5 he was forced to play a move that worsened his position. The game continued 2...♖f8 (2...♙h6 3 ♖f5) 3 ♖f5 ♙g7 (3...♙h6 4 ♖d7). Although White's remaining moves were occasionally not the most accurate, they were quite adequate enough: 4 ♖d8+ ♖f7 5 ♖h8 ♙g2 6 ♖f6+ (6 ♖d4! occupying a central square) 6...♖g8 7 ♖c6 ♙g1 8 ♖f6 ♙g7 leading to the position in exercise 46.

45) **J.Polgar-Kasparov, Dos Hermanas 1996**

1 ♙f8+! ♗f4 (otherwise Black's king has to back away) 2 ♙g8!! and since 2...♙xg8 is stalemate, White's

king escapes towards safety in the centre of the board, e.g. 2...♖h1+ 3 ♔g5 ♖h5+ (3...♗g1+ 4 ♔h4!) 4 ♔f6 and the worst is over.

46) **Salov-Short, Barcelona 1989**

White should be aiming for the Philidor position – his king and the black rook are already correctly placed for this so all he has to do is transfer his queen to e8 and force Black's king to h7. However, in many of these pawnless positions where both sides have reached their optimum set-ups, it is important to give your opponent the move so that he has to worsen his position before you. 1 ♕e8+ ♔h7 would have been pointless since it would have left White with the move. He has to find a forcing way of reaching e8 with his queen in two moves, and achieved this with 1 ♕a8+ (1 ♕c8+ was also possible) 1...♔h7 2 ♕e8 and wherever Black moves his rook, White will have a sequence of checks to pick it off. The game ended 2...♗a7 3 ♕h5+ ♔g8 4 ♕g4+ (4 ♕d5+ was one move faster) 4...♔h7 5 ♕h3+ ♔g8 6 ♕g3+ ♔h7 7 ♕h2+ ♔g8 8 ♕b8+ ♔h7 9 ♕xa7+ ♔h8 10 ♕g7#.

47) **Kiselev-Magomedov, Ljubljana 1992**

The diagram shows the Cochrane position. White has some practical

chances but Black will draw with accurate play. However, this wasn't forthcoming; most of Black's moves were inaccurate. I pointed out earlier that his king should head in the opposite direction to White's king, i.e. 1...♕e8! was the best reply to 1 ♔c5. Instead Black seemed to be doing his best to slip into the Philidor position as quickly as possible: 1...♗d1? 2 ♔f6+ ♕e8 3 ♔c6 and now his rook should have stayed on the d-file to prevent White's king coming over to e6, so 3...♗d2 would have been better than 3...♗c1+?!. Then after 4 ♔d6 Black positively encouraged the white king to come to e6 with another check, 4...♗d1+?, when 4...♗b1 preparing to meet 5 ♕e6 by 5...♗b6+ would still have drawn. After 5 ♕e6 ♗e1+ 6 ♔e5 the players had reached the Philidor position which is objectively losing for Black. Although White had little idea how to win it, Black soon cracked under the pressure and lost.

48) **Ehlvest-Hellers, Haninge 1990**

Although the players were at move 153, Black was still alert enough to spot that if he could entice the white rook to a7 then he could win it by force: 1...♗g7+ 2 ♔h6 ♗g8 3 ♗a7 ♗g1 White resigned as 4 ♔h7 ♗h1+ 5 ♔g8 ♗h8+ 6 ♔f7 ♗h7+ wins.

# Bibliography

I have written the vast majority of this book with the help of a Chess-Base database (1985-97) and the very useful endings key 'Finale'. A database of *Informator* 1-67 proved handy and for the pawnless endings I have also made use of computer-generated databases on CD-ROM. However, I have also consulted the following books:

*Secrets of Pawnless Endings* – Nunn (Batsford, 1994, London)

*Comprehensive Chess Endings (Vol. 5 – Rook Endings)* – Averbakh and Kopaev (Pergamon, 1987, Oxford)

*Rook Endings* – Levenfish and Smyslov (Batsford, 1971, London)

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*Basic Chess Endings* – Fine (McKay, 1941, New York)

*Practical Chess Endings* – Hooper (Batsford, London)

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# Index of Material Balances

## Key:

Numbers refer to pages.

(s) – same-coloured bishops

(o) – opposite-coloured bishops

(-p) – neither side has any pawns

Otherwise pawns are not listed. Thus ‘♖ v ♗’ refers to all endings in which both sides have one rook, and any number of pawns, and ‘♔ v ♔’ refers to all endings in which there are only kings and pawn(s) remaining. Note that the material balance in question may only have occurred briefly in the play or the analysis, but trivial instances are not listed.

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